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WHAT HER FACE SAID:

THE STORY OF FIVE MONTHS,

AS RELATED TO A FRIEND.

BY JANE HEPPLESTONE.

"We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, he will build into
With pillared marbles rare, or knit across
With generous arches, till the fane's complete."
—CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

"I have heard the story,
Pitiful, strange and sweet."
—S. ADYE.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15, WATERLOO PLACE.
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PROLOGUE.

A FEW of us, Mrs. Leyland's friends, had long been aware of a somewhat peculiar story attaching to a certain period of her life. But our knowledge was only partial, and not always accurate. Her sister, little Mrs. Hepplestone, was staying down in the country with us, and having frequent and sometimes annoying evidence of the erroneous impressions we were all, more or less, under, was not pleased that this should be.

She is a staunch friend, a loving sister, and can be a brave champion. She by

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no means intended lavishing explanations where they were not desired, or merely to satisfy an idle curiosity. But she determined that at least one person amongst us —common friends we were of Mrs. Leyland and herself—should be fully acquainted with all the circumstances, and be able to speak the truth of the matter whenever any opportune occasion should arise.

So not many weeks after her return to London I received from her a written relation of the facts, complete in all their details. She chose, she said, to write them down in this precise, circumstantial manner in the first instance, because she would thus be less liable to deceive either herself or me with regard to any particular. As she went on she took a liking for the work in itself, and it gradually assumed the form of a regular

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story, and now, with the writer's consent, it is made public—the names of the persons implicated being changed of course.

One qualification she had for the work—her fancy, long indulged in, for "reading faces," as she said. It seems, indeed, to have suggested to her the very title given to the narrative. And, probably, that reticence of speech and undemonstrative manner which characterized Mrs. Leyland, joined to the reticence for a long period imposed on Mrs. Hepplestone herself by the peculiar circumstances of the case, did compel her, in the need she was under to discover certain facts, to rely even more than usual on this her faculty; her perceptions, moreover, being sharpened through her strongly-awakened sisterly sympathies.

THE EDITOR.

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WHAT HER FACE SAID.

CHAPTER I.

MORE WAYS THAN ONE TO THE WOOD.

"Your worship mun ask that o' the letter itself."
—*She Stoops to Conquer.*

"My poor child," I thought, as she sat there in her quiet cold beauty, in the loneliness and quiet of her beauty—"my poor child, I shall get to know all about you soon."

For Mrs. Leyland was very beautiful; so pitilessly and undeniably beautiful, that she had long forgotten to, as one may say, express her beauty, as most beautiful women will. And so possessed of herself, too; until

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it hurt foolish impatient me—who had undertaken so much, and now could not accept the bitter of the beginning. Why should I expect any kindly intonations of her voice towards me, for my own sake only? If in the time to come I earned them, how much sweeter and more gain!

But I was thinking of her as my sister—and she was not thinking of me at all, except in relation to another person, of whom she thought very much more. And though in a way that was the chief thing I had to rely on, the very situation I had with pain and care even sought to establish, yet if I had let myself I had been too much hurt by it.

You could not easily have believed we were sisters. The great apparent distance of station between us apart, personal likeness there seemed none. We were both of middle height, but she was more fragile than I, or looked so: and she was dark, whilst I

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was fair, and my eyes, of no particular grey, though not small, were too deep-set, and, moreover, commonly too occupied, not to open themselves as wide as God had made them. Well, this is saying what I, not Ada, was. The truth is, that I know I shall not be able in so many words to show you as I would. But if I could tell this story as I have it in my mind to tell it, when it was told you should know. She had hair of a real positive brown colour; and very brown, straight, fine-lined eyebrows; her complexion was pale, even markedly pale, and as she grew older it would probably become sallow; her eyes were of an exquisite colour, a dark grey, not to be called of either hazel or violet shade, but grey eyes simply and solely, with full eyelids veiling their deep light; and there was a subdued serious expression about her mouth and forehead. For all which, here is

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not the Ada Leyland at whom you looked, and then looked again and again; of whom you very rarely heard it observed, "What nice eyes Mrs. Leyland has!" or things of that sort, but whose face fascinated people and made them feel a kind of sadness—they scarcely understood how or why; only it must have been out of something of the same power that has been ascribed to colour in saying that "fine colour is always sad, the loveliest even melancholy."

I must tell you what Jamie says. He says of those first occasions of his seeing her that she, Ada, always reminded him of a picture he had once seen. In the studio of the painter this picture was, and put before him, the visitor, without notice, comment, or asking an opinion on it. It was the most wonderfully suggestive picture, and yet it was only the figure of a girl, with the face turned from you, passing

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out of a room. But because of some subtle idea that had been present in the painter's mind, you felt a curiosity almost amounting to apprehension and pain to know what the face was like; you felt as if it behoved you to know—as if it were not bearable that you might not know—you went back to it constantly, you wanted so the face. And a look into Ada's face was to Jamie just as was that look into the picture with the subtle girl-figure only.

I once saw Ada's husband stand before her portrait, painted by an unknown artist who, craving with his young unworn eyes enough—we may suppose who know how these things are done—after the strange inward visions of beauty or disorder that its very silence told of, had caught the very secret of the face and put it into (though his hand should never again so obey his heart and brain,) a most worthy picture.

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And as I was about telling you, I once saw Mr. Leyland stand before this portrait and say—not being able, as the young artist had been, to put his actual thought into form—that his wife was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. You will fancy what a peculiar sound it had.

He was standing by his wife's chair now, tall, straight, gentlemanly, something, as much as a gentleman may be, of a dandy, with pleasant attractive features and easy companionable manners and not a trace of assumption. Quite charmed now to have had this governess question so easily disposed of, and such a staid, lady-like, altogether satisfactory sort of person so soon found to take the responsible charge of his sister. His manner said all this, and his words even somewhat of it.

"It is a tremendous shame now," said he, cordially towards himself and every one

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concerned; "that we should give you only till next week before commencing your new duties, Miss—ah—Miss——"

"Doughty, sir—Miss Jane Doughty," said I, promptly, and with emphasis; meaning that once for all the name should convey as much as was in it to convey. It was just for one moment I had felt like failing towards myself; I had myself better under control again now. It was when Ada herself spoke to me. Then I could not help, in this the first time of my seeing her for so long, that sort of feeling when one's lips *seem* to whiten, whether they do so or not.

"Miss Doughty, yes. I beg your pardon—never can remember names. You understand our reason, though, for pressing the arrangement—that the child has had an idle time of it rather too long as it is."

"But I don't object to the arrangement

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Mr. Leyland; not at all. I rather prefer that it should be so."

"Well, one thing I can say, Miss Doughty, my sister is not one to give more trouble than she can help. I tell you so because that is not probably your idea of school-girls generally, any more than it is mine. Very incarnations of malice and cunning they seem to me to be: I wouldn't have the teaching of them for eighty times eighty guineas a year."

His sympathy was so deep and hearty I could not forbear laughing.

A shade of answering amusement, too, flitted across Mrs. Leyland's face. All this while she had been looking at me with serious eyes.

"I should be sorry to seem in any way exacting, Miss Doughty," said she then.

It was not quite the kind of voice one expected to hear. It made one immediately think of how young she was; so much younger

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than it had at first come into one's head to think her. And it was not easy afterwards to divest one's self of this sense of her youth. She spoke slowly, and often as though her thoughts were not altogether with her words.

"We do want a great deal of you," she went on, even anxiously. "But it is not what we could speak of exacting, even if we were that way inclined. Because there are things in Miss Leyland's education to which we attach more importance than that she should be very clever and accomplished even. I want her, Miss Doughty, to grow up the same kind of honest, straightforward woman as she is a girl. I should not wish anything better. It seems very difficult, though, now-a-days."

She had been quite quick and eager for one moment; then, as she spoke that last sentence, she had returned to the rigour of her usual manner. It was the first sign of caring

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for anything or anybody, to the point of being moved, that she had shown; it took hold of me at once.

A great author has somewhat fantastically said: "There is one thing which has more resemblance to ourselves even than our face, and that is our expression: but there is yet another thing which more resembles us than this, and that is our smile." Voice and smile must always be so much more to me than the face in the estimate I form of people, and I have learned to observe them: I suspect that there will be many who have observed with me, that it is those persons who smile least frequently whose smile has the greatest charm.

"I hope it is not my presumption," I said, in reply to Mrs. Leyland, quietly—perhaps quaintly it might seem to her, so seldom do people mean strongly such things when they say them,—"but I have a taste for diffi-

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cult work." She liked what I said, or the way I said it—something in me. For into her face came on the instant—and it was the more rarely beautiful for that—a smile "as sweet as a sudden piece of good news." Then I believed in her. I was seeing in her the very reverse of what Jamie had ascribed to her—a painful scrupulousness—let it even be, a proud scrupulousness—in the place of mere vanity and a haughty circumscribed self-regard. And Jamie is certainly no superficial observer; but a very encouraging authority to have in support of one's opinion. One can say of Jamie what has been well said of a much greater man: "He has very highly the faculty of being right." And there were Jamie's facts, too, as well as his ideas. But I was perverse enough to believe in that smile against all or any of them, *even against anything that she might have been or might be.*

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"The carriage is at the door, Miss Doughty," said Mr. Leyland, in his pleasant, courteous fashion; "and, excuse me, to be sure of your train you ought to start at once. Punctuality is the one virtue I flatter myself I have strongly developed."

"Oh, I would not lose the train on any account," said I, hastily, thinking of one who would be disappointed and set worrying.

"No, and your journey is not a short one. But Moore will get you there in time. And you do not travel alone, I think I understood you to say. Well, Miss Doughty, I trust our interview has been mutually satisfactory. I can say for my wife and myself that it is quite—except that we should have been, perhaps, better pleased if you had had some experience in tuition. But we cannot look for everything, and Mr. Bushe's testimonials are all that can be desired."

So I left the room the hired governess of

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Annette Leyland, Mr. Frank Leyland's only sister. It was a matter of deliberate choice; yet I did not quite like it. Nor did George Hepplestone either, who met us—that is, my brother Jamie and I—at Shoreditch, on our return to London, and came in to dinner with us.

It was this displeasure, and because none of us would give it expression, that made us such poor company in the evening; so spiritless and irritable that, had it not been for an intuitive forbearance with each other, we were in just the mood for a downright quarrel at any moment.

The fire—it was the only live thing in the room equal to being bright—flamed and spurted bravely; we had the couch up close, the Skye had carefully disposed himself in the folds of my dress, and slept and "fought his battles o'er again" in his dreams; Jamie had his chair in the centre, a book in his

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hand, a table for his books at his elbow; Mrs. Carlin, on the other side, dozed amidst her cushions. Perhaps because it might have been so pleasant was the very reason we took no pleasure in it. No one spoke much; Mrs. Carlin dozed, woke at intervals with sudden starts, made remarks to my brother, with the air of desiring to impress on herself and us that she had not been asleep at all; my brother unfailingly made the cordial replies expected of him by the dear dame, deaf as a stone though she was; she knitted vigorously for a dozen stitches or so, and in three minutes was dozing again.

Certainly it was not Mrs. Carlin's fault that the evening went so heavily. When we first took rooms in the house in South Carr Street, which was now three years ago, we had sitting-rooms to ourselves; but we fell so much into the habit of spending our evenings with Mrs. Carlin, and in many

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ways it was so convenient, that by-and-by we agreed to have this the standing arrangement; in fact, that there should be but one establishment between us. Jamie thought it would be both desirable and more pleasant for me, with no sister and no near female relative, and Mrs. Carlin was so inoffensive and unobservant an old lady, and, moreover, so deaf, that it did not in the least interfere with the family life which even we two could make for ourselves. She knew, too, what was due to herself, did Mrs. Carlin; she had a great idea of being sociable and considerate, and with that object, as we sat in her drawing-room of evenings, engaged each after our various tastes, she chirruped out her complacent remarks, as I have described, every half-hour or so—to my brother, of course, as the head and in authority; sometimes, in her great courtesy, she nodded and smiled to me, seated opposite, when I would

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nod and smile in return, and perhaps go over to her chair, and enter into the mysteries of pearl-stitch and plain with such discretion and interest: all which was very delightful.

Mrs. Carlin is the cousin of our rector, and it was because our rector is cousin to Archdeacon Bushe, who also holds the rectory of Chudsley Wick—which, as it is well known, is an adjoining parish to the cathedral city of Southwich—that his testimonials had so much weight with Mr. Frank Leyland.

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CHAPTER II.

GEORGE HEPPLESTONE'S COUNTERBLAST.

"The things themselves stood only at a handsbreadth from me, but parted by an impenetrable wall."—GOETHE.

My brother had his book in his hand, and his books by him, after his studious wont; but further than that, his books had not much of his attention to-night. He turned over a leaf if Mrs. Carlin addressed him, but as this was scarcely a sufficient reason for the action, I do not think he could have stood an examination of any severity in the contents of the said leaf. Perhaps rather before his usual time, George rose to leave. But though he rose he did not go at once; he remained standing with his back to the chimney-piece.

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"I think this is all great bosh," he announced, very decidedly, and without any of the leading up to it which such a forcible remark might seem to require.

George had been very good; knowing how strongly our wishes were engaged, he had made no unkind opposition to what we were doing: he is a most unselfish fellow; Jamie always says if he were a little less so people would be more aware of it. Still, with it all, he is something like Rob Roy—"has his fighting days." I don't think one bit the worse of him for it. He had been so good and kind throughout, that a slight ebullition of temper now was easily to be pardoned: and it certainly was very hard on him. As we came up from the station together Jamie had told him the result of my journey. George had made very little answer; only once in the course of the evening, some trivial incident giving rise to

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it, he had said, half in jest, half in earnest, "Oh, yes, I ought to be quite aware by this time that you will take your own way in spite of anything I may say or wish." It was all he said, but I pretty well understood him.

Now no one answering his combative declaration, he found it necessary to repeat and even strengthen it. "I say it is the greatest foolishness and humbug. I am not proud, but I never would push myself in where I was not wanted: no, that I would not. You did quite enough when you wrote to them after poor Wat's death, and neither Mr. Hutton nor that precious spoiled sister of yours would have anything to do with you. And now you must go and expose yourself to fresh insult! You must be fonder of insult than I am. I have heard of such a thing as morbid conscientiousness. I confess I did think I had some voice in matters where Jane was concerned: I suppose I was

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mistaken. We do find ourselves mistaken sometimes." That was a killing sentence, and we felt it to be such. But George had not come nearly to an end of his indictment yet. So—meaning to be solemn and overwhelming, only it was not quite in his way—he went on, "You have acted wholly without your usual judgment in this matter, Jim. If I have said little hitherto, it was because I thought—let him alone and he certainly must see his error before long. Jane would not have been carried away by enthusiasm to do this foolish unbecoming thing, if you had not been carried away first: I have always found Jane very reasonable, and if you had put it in the proper light she would have listened."

"George, whatever share Jamie has had in it, mine is equal," said I, with something of his own positiveness. "It is so, and it does not alter it to say otherwise. And I

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hope Jamie won't attach any importance to what you say. I mean what you say about that one thing: I hope he will think a great deal of your opinion of my reasonableness," I added, smilingly.

But George was not to be smiled out of his ill-humour, and, as one indication of his perseverance in it, continued to address himself to Jamie.

"Yes, Jane will go in a character to which, for comfort's sake, I should prefer that of lady's-maid, into a heartless, fanciful fine lady's house, to be at the mercy of her caprices, and those of a humoured child into the bargain. And what will it be all for? She will have put herself in a false position to no purpose, and the fact will be there to taunt her with when she strives to make use of it. I always thought you very careful for your sister, and certainly this is — the — most foolish business."

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But Jamie was not to be scolded either out of his convictions or into a retort.

"Well, you are very moderate, I think, in only calling me a foolish fellow," said he, with unruffled temper; "and not bad, or selfish, or anything of that sort as well."

"Ah, there you are," broke out George again. "Always the way when one hasn't a leg to stand upon. Because I say you do a foolish thing, does that necessarily imply *you* are foolish? I hate such quibbling. The fact is, Jim, you have no conception of it at all; you don't see why it won't do as well for us to have to wait the next ten years as only the next ten weeks—and if you had not set about originating this precious scheme, we might have been married within the next ten weeks. Now we must be dependent on the uncertain humours of this Mrs. Leyland! When I think of it, it—but

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it is true I don't ought to wonder. You keep out of all this sort of thing until you ——"

A flush of pain came into my brother's grave, usually tranquil face.

"Oh, George!" I said; for once in my life in a ferment of indignation with him.

"Oh, of course I am a surly, ill-conditioned fellow, anything you please—not fit for any such immaculate society. I can bid you good evening if you wish it then."

And he was flinging himself hotly out of the room, only in his angry haste he stumbled over the dog Jumbo, and the terrible howl following thereupon, quite forbade him—with his innate kindness of heart, that no mere anger could for long keep under—from going out, without first ascertaining the extent of the damage. It was a laughable scene, when we could think of it: George's anger and Jumbo's fright had taken them both to about the same distance in the direction of the

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door; Jumbo held up one paw piteously, determined not to forego the luxury of being condoled with. "Poor dog; there, poor dog," said the offender. But Jumbo still made much affectation of being hurt, and George was fain to attempt further soothing measures. The situation was not easy to escape from: George's high horse very unfriendly left him in the lurch; it was quite impossible that he could hold out longer—being George.

He was now probably in as great a wrath with himself as before with Jamie—if only there were a way to show it. Jamie guessing at this, and being one to have rarely to stand on his dignity, gave him a helping hand at once.

"Carried by acclamation against you," said he, with dry humour; his eyes on his book, but with a gesture of his hand towards the dog. "Come to your seat again, old fellow; there is nothing else for you."

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George, with a vexed laugh, came back and stood by me—the accident to the dog having brought me to my feet. "Can't you get up a little Billingsgate for my benefit, Jim?" he said, as a sly first step towards an apology. "I shall feel so much better then."

"How could you say it!" said I, speaking almost as hotly as he had formerly done, finding it much less easy to forgive than Jamie found it. He put his hand on my shoulder, but he kept his words for Jamie: that was like George.

"Jim! Jim! Jim!" said he, with great solemnity. "You know you get the victory over us a hundred times, where properly you ought to be beaten. Why do you take such unfair advantage, and not bully and brag, and speak ungenerously and extravagantly, at least sometimes, as all the rest of us do?" Then changing his tone: "But I know perfectly well it is your high principle which,

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rightly or wrongly, is leading you here. I honour Jane for being able to share it. I suppose she won't mind that I can't like the plan; but I acquiesce in it cheerfully—almost that is," he added, with a smile.

I slipped my hand into his; I pitied him so, poor fellow. I seemed, for the first time, to understand fully how unselfish he is.

For George is not one to throw his opinions overboard hastily, as though he could not get rid of them quickly enough, because they are inconvenient, or he has erred in expressing them badly: yet he can withhold them; which is a very difficult, honourable thing. Both George and Jamie are thorough-going, in each his own way, only these ways are as different as the two men are different in personal appearance and manners—in all outward habits. I don't say that George has much claim to be called handsome, but he is well-looking, with frank

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honest eyes, and a face that expresses at once a certain braveness in opinion and capability: a look of trustworthiness, strength, and temper is with him. He is one of the sort of men whom scholars and men of science, like Jamie, most favour for instruments of changes and fulfilments their own lives are only long enough to outline.

I am confident no one would call Jamie handsome. He is slight-made, with a chest that does not show its full breadth, hair fine and dark, skin very sallow, dark eyes, small features, except for a high, very noble forehead and full nervous mouth, that still escapes any ugly prominence; his face has a grave enthusiasm reigning in it, but it is not handsome. Scholar though he be, he is much more world-informed than you would think; though laws, and terms, and classes are the everyday occupation and conversation of his life—and they say he is very distinguished by

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his grasp of them—yet these are not they which have his heart, nor what he would choose to be distinguished by, but by the laws of kindliness and fellowship; and he has eyes, and thoughts, and time always for those common graces and sympathies which can never become commonplace. I do not know that it would have remained so with him had it not been for the episode in his life, the recollection of which, on George's thoughtless speech, brought the painful colour into his face. Ah! her head was laid to rest long ago, but not her influence. So for her sake's sake, at first, perhaps, the learned curator of the dreadfully scientific Royal English Society keeps always his heart young and warm by humanities innumerable and never-failing thought for all others before himself. Here is a different unselfishness to George's.

"And now I know you will hear me,"

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said he, with enough of emotion left to make his calmness of tone the greater contrast. "When I came back from Southwich, so worried and grieved over the thought of so much youth, and beauty, and capability for happiness going the surest way to wreck itself; not knowing a moment's satisfaction until I had a plan of more or less promise afoot to avert so sad a result, I had not the slightest notion you stood any chance of that berth in the War Office. I am sure I beg pardon for so undervaluing you."

George threw up his head after a habit he has, laughed, and made some half-inarticulate demur. George's success had been the greatest surprise to us; but I think, he himself, though he said nothing, had anticipated it.

"Ah, Jane, you may look so," said Jamie, quite unnecessarily. "You as little expected it as any one."

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"Well, we don't contradict, old fellow," says George. "And if you could foretell everything that was to be, as well as interpret everything that has been, there would be no living with such a sage."

"Yes, but I wish to allow to you that when I mentioned what I had heard at Southwich, of a governess being talked of by the Leylands for the sister, and Jane said, 'Why should I not be that governess?' I acknowledge we went forward with it quicker and further than any of us quite knew, or than was quite wise."

"Oh, pray allow and acknowledge anything you like: if it does you any good," replied George, queerly.

"You are an odd fellow, George," said Jamie, as if he were stating a great truth. And not until the due pause had been allowed it, did he continue. "Well, now you obtain this appointment, and I quite understand that

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the case alters immediately. Had it come to that, if it should come to it now, I have no hesitation as to what my advice to Jane ought to be: of course yours is the higher claim, let a hundred sisters be concerned. But I think you are capable of making the sacrifice, indeed I am sure you *have* made it, for all your fierce diatribes," and Jamie smiled. "I do look into these things, Hepplestone;" his smile growing in a grave sadness.

"Yes," said George, drily. "For after all I think it was Jane who was dull. You never saw any one so surprised as she was when I said, 'Now we can marry.' Why, it was the first thing I thought of when I entered my name, and the first thing I began to arrange for when I found myself really and truly Horne's appointed successor. And I shall go on arranging for it still: I hire my house for next October, and mind, I expect its mistress by then."

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George's jesting tone veiled a good deal of earnest. It fluttered me a little even. Ah, I suppose we women all like best the men who can assert themselves upon occasions.

"I give Jane the quarter," he went on to say, "to bring this affair to some end or other. After that, if she be not prepared, I shall begin to think I am not interesting enough and all that sort of thing, and go and do something dreadful in order to make myself effectually so. Who would have thought that so proper and correct a girl as you, Jane, had so much romance and guile in you! You are almost as bad as one of those modern young ladies of the brimstone hair."

"I confess it had something of the same association for me at first," said Jamie, not able to keep from laughing a little. "But then I thought—I may have judged ill—it struck me here is just one of those marvellously unpractical courses which only

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women can devise, and only women can carry out; and yet which often beat our own cut-and-dried common-sense schemes quite out of the field, they are so unaccountably effective."

"Hem!" said George, dubiously. "Queer style of recommendation you have, I must say, with your very left-handed compliment. But," he asked anxiously, "is Mrs. Leyland at all the woman to be amenable to any influence Jane can hope to bring? And then she will surely be caught by the name."

"Jane says she did not pay the slightest heed to-day. Her husband hesitated at it, too; and Jane had to repeat it, and she even put emphasis on it in doing so. One would think that would have drawn Ada's attention to it, if anything will. But I doubt whether she ever in her life heard my father's aunt's name mentioned; so our change of name when Miss Doughty died and left us

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her property, cuts Ada's clue to us. We were living with Miss Doughty at the time poor Wat died, and we wrote to Mr. Hutton and Ada, but I don't think she was mentioned by name in the correspondence."

"And will you get any other treatment from Mrs. Leyland than you did then? She is a woman, I should say, whose forte it is to be insolent."

"No," said I, warmly; "not that. It is only that she seems to commit against people the one sin against ourselves scarce one amongst us can forgive—the sin of indifference."

"Manifestation the first, Jim," said George, slyly. "Now we shall hear."

"Yes, I know what construction you both put on my silence with regard to Ada. You thought I was disappointed in her. Quite the contrary. I am become a little too eager, I fear. All the more that I can understand

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now—now that I have seen her, spoken with her—that we may never succeed with her."

"Yes, and I can picture to myself exactly how it will be; how you will take it to heart, you foolish child," said George, a little impatience returning into his voice. "What business has the woman with her indifference? What is it but a kind of insolence?"

I did not try to answer George, for I was not myself certain enough to hope to make him see with me.

"I don't think you would find Mr. Hill Mathieson nearly such debatable ground," said Jamie; and his voice had abundant impatience in it. "His forte you would admit at once—just to be gaily, jollily, almost creditably wideawake to the bearing of everything as towards himself. To see much of him would put you almost in patience with Leyland—if it did not as a first necessity put you wholly out of patience with him."

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"Jane has the advantage over me already," said Jamie, after a short pause, with a little gentle irony. "You see, George, she has started a theory and taken a side even thus early."

"Now had I not better have kept silence altogether as I had intended to do?" exclaimed I, appealing to them against themselves. "You quite misunderstood me if you imagine me to —— oh, dear me, how silly of me to begin explaining—as if there would be any end to it!"

I made them both laugh a little with my despair.

"I made it a business," said Jamie, earnestly enough, though—and I knew it to be a kind caution to me—"when I was down at Southwich to see as much as I could of Ada. And I confess *I* cannot tell what kind of nature I have to deal with. I went round the rooms with her twice—

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the second time was when, you know, she put me in two minds about going to their house and making myself known to her there and then. I met her at dinner at the Mayor's house, and again at the Dean's, and then again she was at the Society's conversazione; I listened whenever I heard her name mentioned. And yet I cannot tell what influences she is most open to: what she thinks of Hill Mathieson's intimacy with her husband, whether she cares for her husband at all, or whether she cares for any mortal thing in the world but herself. But I tell you frankly my second impression of her, the impression she in the end left with me, was not as favourable as that I had of her at first. She was never off her guard but once, and then I could have kicked that fellow Mathieson with all the pleasure in the world."

George and I could not forbear smiling at so much pugnacity developed in peaceable

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Jamie. "That was a very wrong state of mind," said George. But Jamie was deep in contemplation, and quite regardless of us.

"And who would have thought," he resumed, "that she was the woman to go and marry where she was bid—the last woman in the world I would have said—such a proud girl, as she must have been, so much sought after as she was: and nothing in the match, either, to gratify any ambition. But every one says, people he liked could not go against Mr. Hutton: look at my poor mother!"

"I have never quite understood the history of that," said George. "He did not treat your mother unkindly, did he?"

"Unkindly? No, no. I suppose there never was a more indulgent husband. And Ada—I should think her greatest difficulty was to invent wants. But you will have seen here and there the kind of man I mean

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—ninety-nine persons out of a hundred yielded to him without wishing to do otherwise; I am afraid I always wanted to contradict him flatly. But though I could keep my own independence, in anything else I was as nothing to him: what he chose to do it seemed he always could do. He took a violent dislike to us, Jane and me, and so—we scarcely knew how, and I dare say she knew as little—we found ourselves estranged from our mother, and denied Mr. Hutton's house. At least I was, in so many words; and Jane was kept at school, latterly not coming home even for the holidays. For Jane is a terrible little partisan, George," said Jamie, smiling on me in his quiet affectionate way, good old fellow; "and Mr. Hutton's law was, Who is not on my side is against me. By-and-by, you know, she accepted this, and came over to me entirely—which, perhaps, was just fulfilling Mr. Hutton's object and intention."

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"Unnatural old donkey," growled George.

"Unnatural or not," answered Jamie, "if he could lead my mother so, we must not wonder he could lead Ada. But it is wonderful, too; and not a thing that ought to be let go," said Jamie, getting almost stern in an access of intense feeling. "See, when after poor Wat's death we felt it so sad that, as if inevitable separation were not enough, there must be this intentional separation, and wrote such anxious earnest letters, begging that the past might be condoned on both sides. You know the result, how Ada seemed to have almost merged herself in Mr. Hutton; her answer was coloured from his answer, and yet was hers entirely: that is a specimen for you of the effectual way he worked. Some persons' influence over others it is quite impossible to measure, or account for, or analyse."

"By what Jane is going to do, she must

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credit herself with some of this peculiar faculty," said George, with a little secret pride in the matter, in spite of his sarcastic tone. "You are a thorough deception, Jane, I begin to suspect."

"I am convinced there is some affinity between the two sisters, wide apart as they appear on the surface," said Jamie, holding his head aside with a critical air. "And Jane's quiet way is the greatest solvent I ever worked with."

"Two foolish people you are, as ever I worked with," railed I. "Do you think either of you have the secret of my conjuring?" For, in truth, I had to keep up my heart; what they said made me a little tremulous—now that I had begun, more almost than was well, to see what I had undertaken, and what failure would be.

"But what has Jane to encounter?" asked George. "It is well to know that.

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Any aspersion on your character—any definite calumny?"

"Simply and solely, I am bound in honesty to believe, prejudice against us. Mr. Hutton did for a short time suppose—very willing so to suppose perhaps—certain false things said of him to have originated with me. But he knew afterwards that he was wrong in his supposition, and owned himself so to me. But one does not need to seek further; when one speaks of an unreasonable, carefully-nurtured prejudice, one ought to know that there is no greater or more invulnerable force in the whole world. Wherever we are concerned, whatever our motives, we must be prepared to see it introduced. There is no saying how you are to meet it—except it be by sheer boldness and defiance, and going beyond it, so to speak. That is why this plan of Jane's almost recommends itself." And Jamie

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appeared conscious that it was a rather dangerous admission.

"It is so beautifully audacious, yes," said George, drily.

"It is right you should know, Hepplestone, Mr. Hutton was engaged to my mother before she married my poor father. I don't know the why and wherefore of it now, but the engagement was broken off, and Mr. Hutton had reason to feel himself aggrieved. Twenty years after he met her a widow, young-looking still, and pretty, with her old indescribable fascination for him. He was not the man to lose her now. I was seventeen; old enough—always, perhaps, older than my years—to feel as if I was being deposed from the championship of my widowed mother, which I had arranged so satisfactorily to myself in my mind; and to resent it, with neither a boy's nor quite a young man's resentment: not old enough to

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know that my arrangements were not a necessity to the right—when are we?"

"And Mr. Hutton saw it, and remembered it?"

"Never forgot it, you may depend. But it was not all that either. For Jane did not so offend, and Jane was included in the proscribed list. He would have liked to have kept Wat, I think; only I was associated with Captain Carne in Wat's guardianship as soon as I came of age, and that did not run with his other ideas. The fact is, he wanted the entire property in people. I at least am as little like my father in personal appearance, and as much like my mother, as ever Ada can be: so not there was the distinction between us in Mr. Hutton's mind. And as for strains of character, they are so intricate and capricious that, after the longest study of a person's, one may not in any instance reckon certainly on the non-appearance of

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any particular family trait. But whatever there was of her father in Ada Mr. Hutton could make his own—there lay all the difference to him between Ada and Jane. Jane, of course, is in everything a rampant Wallace. And so was poor Wat."

"Well, and Mr. Hutton treated Ada as his own child, left her all his fortune, did he not?"

"Left her all his fortune. But there was some condition with it as to her marriage with Leyland,—some forfeiture on whichever side failed to fulfil it. It is said—in Southwich, at all events—that Mr. Hutton ruined Leyland's father,—was the means of ruining him rather—in the quite respectable general course of business, you understand. And they say the consciousness of this was the cause of his making a *protégé* of the son. Poor child, what is she to come to between them? Which way does the path lie for her?"

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CHAPTER III.

THE NETHER HOUSE AND ITS PEOPLE.

"Voici comme on affirme, et comme on décide dans ce monde."—M. D'ARBLAY.

THE Leylands' place at Southwich is known as the Nether House. It is a large house in white stone with sepia-coloured woodwork and deep thatch roof. It is not quite on a level with the river banks, standing some one hundred yards away, and some thirty yards above them; but the grounds run down to the banks in terraces with turfed walls, and in this summer time in which I first knew it, these were one blaze of scarlet and yellow and hot purplish blue and deepest crimson. There are crimson

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silk curtains, too, to some of the rooms, and altogether there is a great deal of warm colour about the place. The garden slopes two ways, down to the river and on a line with it. Over the brow of the nearer and higher part appear the heads of great trees. A small arm of the river runs up on the lower side; this is private to the occupants of the Nether House, and in it lie the Leylands' boats—a rowing boat and a small river yacht. Here one may sit and see the flame of the garden and feel the deep cool of the river. It is good, also, sometimes to come up amongst the brightness of the garden.

To this beautiful place my duty called me; here I sat down and made my reconnaissance and ran out my parallels and set up my batteries. It is the day after the battle won that the fatigues and conflicts of the campaign most oppress you; even so that perchance you gently take the bays

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from your head and only ask that you may forget.

Unquestionably it was a great change from the life in South Carr Street—a life as independent as possible, with only the ties of family and friendship to bind one; a life than which, God knows, it is not good to have more independence; a life, too, through which there was always a fresh healthy current of world's news and world's doings. Indeed it was amongst the doers that I lived, and I often heard of and saw the town's nine-days' wonders before the town knew of them. From this busy, ordered freedom to the dull routine of a school-room, the restraint of an assumed character, was a change that indeed one required some stimulus to accept cheerfully and hopefully: but not because of the kind of discomfort George had predicted.

"Don't you find Mrs. Leyland extremely

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proud?" I have been asked, by more than one amongst those many mistaken but not ill-intentioned people who can see no sin against good taste in thus at once presupposing antagonism, or, at all events, no unity of interest between employer and employed: by girls, sometimes, who condescended to me with a long string of most personal confidences, and would not have cared a doit for any of mine in return, but who had a little inquisitiveness about Ada, perhaps, as one of their own acquaintances: by sister governesses, sometimes, who themselves counted everything their own grievance that was not in full accord. "N—no," I have answered; and then more boldly, "No; I so rarely see Mrs. Leyland fail in respect towards people. She is not a frank person: I expect that is what you mean." They have not always known what *I* meant.

"I can't condescend to people," Mrs.

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Leyland said to me once; only it was after this: "I think, Miss Doughty, I should be better liked if I could." And then she smiled her grave wistful smile. "But I cannot make up my mind to insult people so; even if they like it."

Say that Ada too often showed to people a cold uncharmed face—still, let you speak of her to any of her dependants, it mattered not of what degree, or of what disposition, the answer came even affectionately, and yet with an immense amount of respect and obedience. And I was of Ada's world now—it fastened itself firmly in my mind that here was the very clue to which I must hold to guide me to what I sought.

No, it was not a difficult place in itself, that of governess at the Nether House: it was taken as understood that I had a gentlewoman's tastes; I had a pleasant sitting-room to myself; we, my pupil and I, had a servant,

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an elderly woman, whose sole duty it was to attend on us. And for my pupil, one could not help loving the child, so kind and gentle and thoughtful was she. It is striking, how different results appear where characters still have the same bases: I am told that the elder Mrs. Leyland, who was but lately dead, was just that kind of woman; always mild, kind, thoughtful for others. And whilst Frank Leyland would have grown away from his mother, Annette—and here is the constantly recurring difference—had, we may think, grown towards her. She was a tall, fine girl for her thirteen years, with much fair hair; not a pretty child, but with a promise of growing into that pleasant, well-looking English loveliness which has much dignity and character attaching to its initial sweetness.

And in all this, in the child's thoughtful, lovable character, there was much advantage

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and hope, that great element in success, for me. Ada was on the happiest, most charming footing with Annette, and when I saw Ada, it was nearly always with Annette. Annette was womanly for her age, and Ada showed less of that very formal manner when with the child, seemed so much less a woman of the world, seemed gladder and more content: perhaps it was a better sign to me, looking on with curious eyes and some ideas, because there was impulse in it as well as principle.

And speaking of these things, to me there was no more peculiar feature in our relations than the supervision Ada, in her care for Annette, exercised over me; and the counter-supervision I, in my care for things she never dreamed of, exercised over her.

"Things are very far from right, you say," wrote Jamie to me, when I had been

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at Southwich some four or five weeks; "but they may come right—the Coulthursts are away, and so is Hill Mathieson; and you believe in Ada against everything, against anything that may have been in her own mind even—the phrase which has taken hold of you with regard to her. I do not say you are in error, my dear, nor do I wish to be a prophet of evil; but that the Coulthursts and Mathieson are away does not better your case: it leaves it unproved. And you entirely admit the dangerous fact that there is none of the confidence there ought to be between husband and wife between these two; owning you would rather they were uncivil to one another occasionally than be as they are now.

"You say you can understand how Ada, though so much sought after, is not what one could call popular in society; but that she is really capricious you utterly deny: her

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caprices, you say, are all slight, simple things, towards herself, as it were; you say she almost startles you sometimes by the strength of the directly opposite quality in her, and renders you quite hopeless in respect to one great desire of ours. But there may be fatality in it, too, to that other object of ours which is of even vital importance.

"I should take Ada to be more secure if she were not strong where most other women would be weak: if other ties give way, what people's judgment on her may be, will not restrain her, as it would most women; and trust Mathieson for taking this into his reckoning. If he can only get her to despise her husband enough, that is his aim, and an artful one. Then there may come a moment when a word spoken truly and well, might be Ada's salvation; yes, I do believe there is that in her which would answer to it. And I believe a certain dear sister of mine,

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out of her steady faithful heart, will be able to speak it.

"You say, Jane, that Ada is very slow to care for people, but that you think she is perhaps getting to like you; that at times she will ask for your opinion, as if she attached value to it, on what appear quite general matters, but which you can see have for her some personal application, although you cannot tell what, her thoughts being at all times so much fuller than her words. Sister Jane, you are a brave little woman and a redoubtable one . . .

"P.S.—George went the other day and bought a large-paper copy of Machiavel, and the complete works of Jonathan Swift, D.D. He was not going to have his mind's health destroyed for anybody, he said. I did not know whether he had informed you of the fact, so I thought I would mention it."

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I was five weeks installed in my post at the Nether House before I saw Hill Mathieson—who, we in South Carr Street had quite settled, was to be the villain of the piece. I don't know that I exactly looked for him to stalk on in character, but his appearance did give a shock to my conclusions. One might credit a young fellow something over twenty, rather lavish with his tongue, perfectly at ease with himself, and superabounding in animal spirits, with utter lack of principle; it was not so easy to continue to believe him a master in duplicity: in truth, I always did say, and I still say, he was no strategist. What he was, I hope to make you see as far as I myself ever could.

It was one Sunday he first played to me. We were come in from attending afternoon service, only we ladies; Mr. Leyland had stayed at home, and his wife now went into the drawing-room to him before taking

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off her bonnet, and Annette with her. I went to my own room; in a few minutes Annette came running in.

"Oh, Miss Doughty, Mr. Hill Mathieson is here. And he is going to stay dinner. Oh, he will amuse you." And the child danced round in glee.

I was taken quite unawares, more unawares than I ought to have been; I felt for the moment as if I was turning round with the child.

"I don't at all expect to be amused though," said I, sharply, when I had got my breath. "Amusing men are my detestation."

Annette looked as though she could not at all understand why I wanted to be so cross about it, but before she could make any kind of reply Mrs. Leyland knocked and entered.

I ought to tell you that during the week Annette and I dined by ourselves in the middle of the day; Annette going into the

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drawing-room after the Leylands' dinner, and I, too, frequently: that was just as I wished, unless when there was company, when Mrs. Leyland mostly specially mentioned it to me to join them. This was the week-day rule, but on Sundays we had always passed the whole day with Mr. and Mrs. Leyland.

"We shall have company to dinner, Miss Doughty," said Mrs. Leyland now, "but you and Annette will dine with us just the same." Her face appeared quite calm, but there was a secret restlessness in her voice that had not been there before—and then one fancied it was perhaps in her face, too.

"Oh, thank you, Ada," exclaimed Annette, in her high child's voice. "I thought you were going to say we were not to dine with you. But that would have just suited Miss Doughty, though; she says she cannot bear Mr. Hill Mathieson."

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In the first moment the colour came into Ada's face, and she drew back within herself in a curious way that was only observable in what may be called its negation of expression; the next moment she turned to me with a good deal of surprise, and not a little disapproval in her manner. It was awkward for me; more awkward than the mere words alone made it, and the colour came into my face, too.

"My dear Annette," I cried, with as little appearance of being convicted out of my own heart, if not out of my own mouth, as I could assume, "what are you thinking of? I have never even seen Mr. Mathieson to dislike him. It was simply this, Mrs. Leyland: Annette," it was anything but ingenuous of me, I know,—"Annette was expressing herself so strongly on how much I was to be amused by Mr. Mathieson that I felt called upon to check her by

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saying that it was not at all likely, since amusing people were my detestation."

"That is quite another thing you see, Annette," said Ada, a little gravely. "It is a very bad habit, dear, to get into—that of putting different words into people's mouths; what you take them to have meant and not what they have actually said."

It was very generous as well as just, what she said; and yet when Ada spoke in that tone, it always made me feel sorry. It was as though she had had an immensity of experience, and all this experience had tended towards making her mode of thinking more stringent; all her impulses being towards tenderness, all her life-lessons towards repression—and that to me seems a very sorrowful thing. But, indeed, Ada might well speak a little gravely here; for if more persons had made such a rule for themselves, and followed it, there need, perhaps, to have been no such

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tangled skein as there was now before me to unravel.

When I made my choice to come to the Nether House I had had some things said to me for guidance, and before going into the dining-room to meet Hill Mathieson I ought to speak of these: some had been told me for facts, some for possibilities, some for possible eventualities.

Clare Mathieson through a whole year had played fast and loose with Frank Leyland, and had ended in marrying young Sir John Coulthurst almost whilst Frank had thought himself engaged to her; Mathieson himself had stood by heedlessly conniving at the fooling of his most intimate friend: perhaps, in his perverted notion of good pastime, its instigator. Frank Leyland, obliged to accept the fact as best he might, still hankered weakly after the Mathiesons, yet —they would be unwise who should essay

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too closely to analyse motives—could put sufficient spirit and sincerity into his wooing of my sister to win her for his wife. Here was my sister Ada Wallace, Mr. Hutton's heiress, a very beautiful girl, undeniably a very proud girl, too; with a great sense of what was due to a woman in such case; with just that kind of pride about her most dangerous to any man's pretensions to her hand —she had, indeed, to every one's knowledge refused men who were Leyland's superiors ten times over, in a worldly point of view. Yet, in spite of the half-heartedness asserted of him in the matter, Leyland could display sufficient spirit and sincerity, at all events, to enable her, by accepting him, to gratify Mr. Hutton's strongest expressed wish without too much sacrifice of pride. It was not easy to understand.

Hill Mathieson had let fall a few fierce words on finding that Leyland had succeeded

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with the least amount of trouble where his own passionate patience had had no effect: they had not come to Leyland's ears to check him in his intimacy with his unrecognized rival, but they were caught up by other ears, and taken careful heed of with a righteous determination that they should lose nothing in the process of repetition. Tongues were set wagging, and there were at once found people to impute motives and to be confident of the whole course of things. Mr. Hutton died suddenly, and these talkers said the engagement would go no further; the marriage followed, and they were sure there was some clause in Mr. Hutton's will that had not been made public: it had got into people's heads that it was not to be a common affair.

But they felt they were on more delicate ground now, where it was as well to be cautious, and straightway they gave their

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judgment on what had passed and was passing in that stage whisper which goes the furthest of any kind of speech. The marriage was not the most happy; Frank Leyland was still much too fond of the Mathiesons, and cared nothing for what his wife thought or wished in the matter. Or Mrs. Leyland was perfectly indifferent to her husband, and permitted Hill Mathieson to hang about her house in a very objectionable way. Opinions wavered between these two lines of judgment, —which, indeed, only differed as to the side on which was the balance of wrong-doing,— and there was just the constant bandying about of names which a woman should, next to actual evil, most fear and shun for herself. Perhaps both husband and wife found it convenient that each should take their own way, people then said, with that careless laugh which may mean anything or nothing, but which, still, is crueller in motive

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and effect than the most vehement protestation.

The Royal English Society holding its annual meeting at Southwich, Jamie attended in his official capacity, and heard these things spoken of much too often and too freely in Southwich society: with his strong conscientiousness the mere knowledge appeared to lay on him responsibility—and he had the opportunity, too, to see with his own eyes that all was not right with the Leylands. There were things he told me of that I was a long time before I could put a meaning to; it was very difficult to understand Mrs. Leyland with regard to Hill Mathieson; it is at least terribly rash for a woman to measure her strength against such temptation as, at all events, people supposed here.

There could be no rest for Jamie, as he has said, until something to meet the situation had been devised; even if that some-

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thing should come to no more than the means of knowing when the time had arisen for us,—heeding nothing that had gone by, nothing that was to be,—to say to our sister, "You are not alone in the world, for we will not leave you alone. Yes, we are past giving you any choice in the matter. Through whatsoever sorrowful stony path it be you may go we deny it to you to say that you are alone; you shall never need to first call to us for aid: we are with you, and take your need upon us as ours, even though you turn from us and say, These are strangers and enemies to us."

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CHAPTER IV.

THE CURTAIN IS UP.

"It was not what she had at all thought of saying, but we see a very little way before us in mutual speech."—*Romola.*

As I told you, it was a young confident fellow to whom I was introduced; a young fellow with not a bad face either, as we picture bad faces to ourselves. It appeared that he had driven over from Borley, a small town about ten miles from Southwich, wanting to see Mr. Leyland, before going to London by the last train at night, which he could take, too, most conveniently from Southwich; and Leyland had asked him to stay dinner.

This Sunday evening he occupied himself,

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to outward appearance, not so much with Mr. or Mrs. Leyland, as with Annette; and there was, perhaps, considerable cleverness in taking this kind of neutral course—not an unusual course, either, with him; as one might deduce from the child's pleasurable anticipations immediately on becoming aware of his arrival. I suppose most persons would have said that he showed to great advantage; *prendre chacun par où il est prenable*—it is a very pretty motto for those who like it, and has, indeed, done plenty of God's service, as well as some of the devil's: I own to being a very prejudiced person. He was much too well-bred by one single word to trespass, but he had not the least doubt of himself, and could have confronted and reduced the greatest bore in the world: that his company had always the effect of making me in love with dulness was, I admit again, my prejudice, of course. He told the child tales,

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and revelled in her astonishment; his fancy took the most ludicrous flights, he devised the most absurd fictions, all to hear her solemnly indignant rebukes. He had spirits and entertainment for all, even an easy polite word sufficiently often for me. They say that in his father's bank the clerks are surprised at his aptitude for business, and that even the most cautious and oldest of the cashiers affirm he has the longest head for it of any of the partners. But, perhaps, they mean the coolest and most wary head, for people are not usually careful about terms: not so careful as they ought to be.

Mathieson's talk flowed on; Frank listened or joined in, pleased, idle, and interested; Ada was entertained, but not pleased to be so, I thought, who began to know the subtler lines of her face; a secret dissatisfaction and doubt rankling within her. Mathieson, though making no apparent sign, was obser-

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vant of it, too; quite conscious of his power to disturb her.

"Oh, about Clare!" said Mathieson, in his brisk sudden way. "By-the-by, Clare and Sir John don't go to Scotland now. They come down to Audleybury for a week or two, and then they are off to Paris."

"Oh, Clare—Lady Coulthurst—to Paris, do they?" said Mr. Leyland, a great deal too interested, and about as cunning as an ostrich in blundering on to Paris instead of Audleybury.

"How pleased your mother will be," said Ada to Mathieson, with steady sleepy eyes—he had been too sudden for his full purpose; and she—she had distrusted herself more than she had needed.

"The mother is in high feather," replied Mathieson, irreverently. "By-the-by, Mrs. Leyland, I have a message for you. On the testimony of two witnesses you have

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been seen four times in Audleybury without having once favoured Blackross with a call" (this was the Mathiesons' Audleybury house, Audleybury being the chief town of the other division of the county). "My mother thinks you have forgotten her existence, and begged me to put you in mind of it."

Hill Mathieson was twenty-nine, but had the face, air, gesture of a much younger man; the complaisant, facile expression. It was only when you had talked with him some time that you found out why he was not good-looking; that his eyes were too shifty, and that probably he had a different temper for home than for abroad. Then, if you cared about it sufficiently, you would try to complete your theory, and decide that not only did he lack sensibility, which is not so essential to a man, but also veracity, which is of the first necessity to him; and in the lack of these two governing qualities, you would

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read the secret of his light-hearted unconstrained manner.

"I must plead the number of my engagements. We had certainly not the intention of neglecting Mrs. Mathieson," returned Ada, quite courteously, but her slow languid way a decided contrast to Mathieson's energetic mode of expressing himself. "I think, indeed, we visited half the shops in Audleybury the last time of our going there," and she smiled slightly towards her husband.

"Yes; I know I thought myself a hardly-used fellow," laughed Frank.

Ada played with her fork a minute, then she looked up in the same slow way. "Our next visit to Audleybury will probably come when Lady Coulthurst is down, and so we shall be gainers by our delay."

"Thank you for Clare," replied Mathieson, looking into his wine-glass, instead of at her or his host. "I am afraid I shall see but

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little of Clare. I have received sentence of banishment to the branch at Borley. Confounded nuisance altogether."

"Coulthurst is such a fellow," he continued, "for arranging things ages beforehand. Why, I will be bound he has the ground staked out for the next three years. The consequence is, people have to arrange their affairs by his; the chances are twenty to one something occurs to change everything, and there is a regular hash of it—as far as we small fry are concerned, at all events. I can survive the disappointment of being away at Borley whilst they are down; but I had laid for Scotland in August. And now I must look up something else."

"I was giving you credit for fine fraternal feeling," said Leyland, lazily.

"Don't give me credit for fine anything, my good fellow," answered Mathieson, airily. And though I don't know that he wanted to

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have it taken just so; that was about the essence of Hill Mathieson's creed. Dickens paints one of the characters in *Nicholas Nickleby* "as if he really had a notion of some day or other being able to take himself in, and persuade his own mind that he was a very good fellow." Hill Mathieson was exempt even from this "last infirmity" of unscrupulous minds.

When the time for leaving came, Leyland said he would walk down to the station with Mathieson, and so we were left to ourselves. Soon Annette had to say good-night; I was about to leave with her, as usual, when Mrs. Leyland asked me to stay. It was then she herself betrayed herself to me. She let herself just for one minute speak of Hill Mathieson with such consuming passionate scorn as almost frightened me: for I did not know all then. She did not mention him by name, nor give any transparent hint of whom

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she spoke. No, the idea in her mind was quite other than that: had she at all apprehended that I could follow up what she said she would have been silent. It came about thus.

She was sitting in the window; I was seated but a little distance from her, only further into the room. She had a habit—a habit which I think possibly the view from the Nether House windows in itself might teach people of a certain temperament—of looking out into the wide air when she talked; she had her face half turned that way now, to where, over the full swelling brow of this nearer side of the hill on which the garden lay, looked the heads of the great trees, which had root, in long ranks, low by where the river ran; beyond were the marshes, with the first grey darkness of night on their green, threaded by black streams; beyond all was a pale opaline sky, with broad streaks of dark

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grey cloud low in it: such a sky as makes you think as you thought when a child—that if you only walked on, on, on, you would at length come to the edge of the earth and the foot of the sky, and, could you dare enough, enter into the heart and mystery of it. It is only with sunset skies this ever seems possible. I fancy a poet of our day had it in his mind to show us something of this same notion when, in one of his minor poems, spoken as by a soul newly released from the flesh, he says—

> "Followed a dreamy pause: And then the sound
> As of a door that opened—*in the West*
> *Somewhere I thought it was.*"

She said if I did not care about them we would not ring for lights yet. And then we talked of many things. Well, in some way, from one thing and another, our conversation fell on a certain man of note in the literary and artistic world, who had recently

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contrived to crown an evil career by a deed so infamous, that henceforth there seemed no place for him amongst honest men. His position had been such, and his act had been such, that, do what they would, his family could not keep the affair secret; it was the common talk of society. Ada, who participated in the general interest, finding I had a personal acquaintance with the culprit himself, inquired concerning some of the less understood particulars; and I, for the sake of friends of mine, was glad to be able to enlighten her.

"Ah," I said, "there is only one person to have any hope of him left now, and that is my brother Jamie. He has written to him since this, Jamie has; a strange letter you might think it, Mrs. Leyland. He told him that he knew for certain of two hearts that he had broken, and of numberless friends estranged who had, even to this last, loved

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him and hoped in him beyond what they had ever done on their own behalf. And then Jamie told him that he himself deemed him to have acted most wickedly, most heartlessly; that he was ashamed for him, even to the point of physical shrinking, when he considered his conduct, so vile was it. Oh, he put it into the most bitter words. But then he ended by saying that, notwithstanding all this, he was never to think he had given him up. 'Remember, K.,' he said, 'you are pledged to my continual faith in you to make people glad because of you some day; all the good gifts God has so liberally bestowed on you turn on you and demand it.' If you had read the letter, Mrs. Leyland, I think you would have thought as I did, that it would be a long time before K. forgave it, but that it would be quite impossible that he should ever forget it, and that it would burn a way to his heart some day."

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"It is very admirable of your brother," said she, slowly, with her face turned to the window. "I think he must be a good friend to have." And then she paused; and then, turning her face swiftly on me, and speaking in a voice still low, but all heavy and strange, with all the strength of her will put on it to suppress the feeling in it, she said, "But is he not wrong? will he not find he has made a painful mistake? There are persons, I believe, who have no good in them to make it possible for them to reform; whom it is the most dangerous thing to have any charity for. I know one: why—why—" she had quite forgotten Jamie and K. now; there was such anger, there was such fear, there was such wounded love, there was such scorn, in her shaken, low voice. "Must it always be wrong to hate people, Miss Doughty? I think it is sometimes right."

Before that voice, that might at any

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moment tell such a passionate sad truth, I was not self-reliant enough, not stoical enough, to go on anatomizing, as it were, the meaning of her life.

"My dear Mrs. Leyland," I said, lightly, as a cowardly means of refuge from her, "please do not press it too closely, else where may we find ourselves? Let us be easy with ourselves, and call it a pardonable weakness."

She turned her face to the window again, perhaps a little disappointed in me because of my lightness: well, had it happened a hundred times, I could not have made my opportunity of it. And soon she did ring for lights.

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CHAPTER V.

BETWEEN THE LINES.

"I tell her story and grow passionate,
She did not tell it so."—*Aurora Leigh.*

THE next week Leyland went to London for four or five days. Annette was very companionable for her years, and we were oftener with Ada now her husband was away. This young, beautiful, weary wife puzzled me more and more. There seemed a sort of steadfastness, too, in all she did; in her management of her household, in her kind care for Annette: a certain strength which my practicality could appreciate, when by help of other qualities of mine I had distin-

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guished it. It seemed to me, too, that I had seen it even gain on her in the short time I had been at the Nether House.

Leyland stayed rather longer in London than he had talked of doing. The evening of his return, he said to his wife, over a book and cigar—we all were sitting out in the verandah:

"The Coulthursts are as far as London on their way to Audleybury."

She rose to check the vagrant tendencies of a climbing rose, and thus set in the outer light and inner shade, turned her eyes on her husband: "And is Lady Coulthurst as pretty as ever?"

"I never could see her pretty," he returned, getting a fresh light to his cigar, and looking very decided over it. An ordinary woman would have reasserted, argued her rival's prettiness; Ada rather shabbily let the discussion of it fall.

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"Of course you called?" said Ada, looking carelessly about amongst the roses.

"Yes. Well, you know, I met them in calling upon Mathieson—they were at the same hotel; and so I was in for dinner, and that sort of thing before I knew. They are coming for a week to the Banbrooks'. When they are so near we shall have to get up something for them, I suppose."

"Yes." And Ada walked leisurely in at the open doors.

Where I sat, the glass of a picture in the drawing-room itself reflected for me the whole of the room. It was quite accidentally that I glanced up to see in it the reflection of Ada standing in the further part where our direct eyesight could not follow her,—Ada standing quite away in the further part of the large room, with the great impatience of pain scarce to be borne shewn in her knit hands kept vehemently down, in the pale

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strange misery on her wild awakened face. Somehow I did not like to look after the first curious moment.

"We can't do less than show old friends that little attention, Miss Doughty," said Leyland. He knew he was not acting worthily by his wife: lately he had fallen into the habit of talking at his conscience through me.

Ada came quietly out and seated herself near him. The old patience was in her face, the slight droop of the serious mouth that a little more would make piteous.

"We were thinking," after a while, she said gently, "of giving a garden-party, Frank. Would it not be just the thing to ask the Coulthursts to?—it is what we can always best do here. We could give it as for them, you know."

I believe he had almost done his wife the insult of thanking her; however, he con-

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tented himself with simple agreement. I cannot at all suppose, though, that she lost this moment's prompting. Indeed, quick upon it, I caught in her that same curious trick of face, as in the first moment of Annette's telling her I could not endure Hill Mathieson. I was glad when, by degrees, we found our way into other and pleasanter topics.

The evening was closing in now; Leyland laid aside his book, and I laid aside my work. Ada rose from her seat and went down into the darkness of the garden, where the armies of flowers stretched out their mournful array, and their yellow fought vainly against the dark, and their scarlet deepened into banded crimson: suddenly the gloaming came down and for us there were no more flowers. When we spoke our words seemed to pass away into shadows. Leyland shifted uneasily in his chair, leaned out, and looked the way his wife had gone.

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"It was so beautiful below," said her young slow voice behind him; "you cannot think! There was a great shaft of sunlight across the river. And it went so suddenly."

He started quite from his chair. "My dear Ada! Come, let us go in, pray; it is quite time."

She had been by his side in the dark, and he had not known it. There were many things, I think, in his life that it behoved him to know, and he had not known them.

It was on some one of these days,—I do not remember the exact occasion, nor how I came to be present,—that a visitor, the clergyman of one of the city parishes, was speaking to Ada of a lady in whom he was interested, a schoolmistress whose heart was failing her under her difficulties.

"Ah," she said, earnestly; "you must not allow your friend to lose heart. We

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women must believe in ourselves if we would do anything; we fail in all, if we fail in faith in ourselves." The words came from her heart; but she smiled when she had spoken them, to hide, so it seemed to me, any singularity in her strong conviction, and so I found the smile sad. I once saw a letter of hers written on some indifferent occasion, in which was the same deep-grounded assertion. The person to whom the letter was written which contained the words would never know it, but they stood, I have no doubt, for what seemed to her the absolute necessity of uttering the particular feeling to some one or other, to whatever reception.

"Where did you learn your philosophy?" laughed Mr. Sheard now, innocently unconscious of the presence of anything in the talk besides the necessities of his subject.

Ada laughed too. "Where did I learn my philosophy? I think perhaps I can be

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of a little assistance to Mrs. Murrie. I was telling Miss Doughty only the other day that I should like Miss Leyland to begin Italian —a language Miss Doughty is a great purist in, Mr. Sheard. She did not seem satisfied, then, for any one but herself to teach it to the child. But I am sure, under the circumstances," with a pleasant deprecatory look directed towards stubborn me, "I may engage Mrs. Murrie, who, I have heard, is quite capable, for the purpose. Well then, Mr. Sheard, I will call on Mrs. Murrie and make the arrangements—you are quite at liberty, though, to mention my intention to her should you see her before I do so. Indeed I should be glad that you did."

"Thank you many times over, Mrs. Leyland," said Mr. Sheard, highly gratified. "It will bring Mrs. Murrie any number of Southwich pupils."

And I dare say Mr. Sheard went away

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thinking that when Mrs. Leyland was affable at all, no one could be pleasanter or more good-natured: pity that for her own sake she was not so oftener. But I think Ada wore that sadly cold, disdainful face because of a world that wore the same cold, disdainful aspect—that dealt in hard words which seemed to belie the kinder deeds and kinder thoughts that I believe do exist; and that Ada simply dared not—cowardice of any sort whatsoever is never well, I know—that she dared not be her better self, except to innocently unconscious folk like good Mr. Sheard. I do not imply she was not her real self; for, certainly, there was an element of pride in her: still some elements within us we can allow to expire of inanition, or can train to a new form; especially if outer help come to us. And I say, pity that the world cannot deal in kind words oftener. But lo! here we slip into the circle of sore

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hearts, and the long entail of life-lasting disquietude.

Well, the Coulthursts came on their visit to the Banbrooks, and the invitations to the garden-party were sent out; a dinner invitation came, too, to the Leylands from the Banbrooks, but Ada was indisposed, and Leyland, with some faint talk of remaining at home also, went off without her. And next the Nether House opened its doors to the county folks and the best of the city people, and the gay company streamed in and out, and over the terraced gardens, and drank tea, and played croquet and archery, and made little expeditions down the river, all with a great deal of that liveliness and zeal which is popularly supposed to be quite banished from their ranks. It was as mirthful, summer-day, informal a gathering as one would wish to see. Several girls, who had not yet "come out," had managed to get included in

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the invitations, and Annette took upon her the part of hostess to these, performing it with characteristic staidness and aptitude.

For myself I found a sober occupation, suited to my governess-ship, in assisting to entertain the elder members of the party, who, soon fatigued by the busy out-door scene, took frequent refuge within. All the principal rooms in the Nether House face the river, and open, with high French doors, on the garden; they were all free to the guests of the day, and so, perhaps, with the constant movement in and out, my occupation gave me as much opportunity for observation, and as much to observe, as though it had been invented on purpose. Alack-a-day! I think I merited the titles I had given me afterwards of spy and impostor.

I heard curious things that day. People always wanted to talk with Mrs. Leyland; but they were not always quite pleased whilst

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talking with her; she was sometimes a little stringent, and sometimes a little supercilious, and would not often give them reason to think kindnesses from them could be acceptable to her: in consequence, perhaps, in the rare cases where she was franker and asked more of people, she was served as few are, and attached people to her as few can. But the first result of this was that she could not be called popular. And to-day I had to hear women, mothers of families, who would have wept bitter tears, broken their hearts almost over it, if such things as they inferred had befallen daughters of theirs—I had to hear these guests of Mrs. Leyland's speak significant words and use significant looks, not heeding my unimportant presence—words and looks scarcely checked for the proud secret face not to be smitten out of its quiet with the hearing and sight of them. It had the same effect on me

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as on Jamie, so far as that I was as hurt and indignant as ever he had been.

There were exceptions notwithstanding—and the exception to the evil rule ought at all times surely to receive frank and glad recognition. Amongst the company was a sweet woman whom I know more of now than I knew then, and my growing knowledge of her has been one continual lesson in goodness. Her face tells you what to expect—in its sweetness, its strength, its severity of purity; in its fifty-five years or so also: it is fine to see a belief in one's kind in people of matured years—to see it surpass our own in the same degree that their years do ours. This lady is Mrs. John Rogerson; her husband is the Leylands' lawyer—Rogersons and Homfray the firm goes; lawyers to one-half the Southshire families, I may say. It was not much that she said; but yet, few as they were, her words

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noticeably checked the current, and softened the bitterness of the talk.

"Ah, they are young things," said she, gently, after some especially harsh comment.

There was at first a little fluttered silence —as if something improper had been said. Then the general disfavour found voice.

"Oh, if one chooses to be sentimental!" spoke one haughty sarcastic lady.

"But, my dear Mrs. Rogerson," cried another of the scandal-mongers, and one of the harshest — in accents of severe virtue, "you would never defend such doings?"

"Do I defend them?" she answered simply, and without argument. "Am I sentimental?" And what they knew of Mrs. Rogerson, I apprehend, spoke the rest.

Not that I could wonder much that people should make remarks; what I quarrelled with them for was, that because of one wrong they must imagine two. I could not be

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much surprised at their remarks if I used my eyes at all. Outside there was pretty foolish Lady Coulthurst, and two or three girls who would take homage second-hand rather than not have it at all, with half-a-dozen fellows hanging about her, paying her compliments, finding her in amusement, and in all things for the day at her service; Leyland amongst them.

And Mrs. Leyland was going about amongst her company, sometimes in the garden and sometimes in the rooms, with calm graceful bearing and regard for every one; not smiling much, nor very gay, but then that she rarely was: what could you expect more of them than that they should interpret it as indifference? But to me there appeared that same great patience in her face as many times before, and I thought of what she had said to Mr. Sheard.

"What a fool your sister is making of

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Leyland," said Firle of Borley, twirling his moustache as if he was beyond—and perhaps he was—all fooling; addressing himself to Hill Mathieson.

"Clare knows what she's about," answered Mathieson, with his not quite honest laugh. "Coulthurst's proud of the admiration she excites, and glad to have her amuse herself."

"Haw!" ejaculated Firle, and thought probably that when he should take a wife she should amuse herself after another fashion than did Lady Coulthurst. Nevertheless, the next thing, he joined the group she had drawn around her.

How I hated that bad fellow, Hill Mathieson! And would not Jamie's eyebrows go up if he saw that sentence!

Can I make you understand how, with all this that was objectionable and displeasing, with every hour of that day some of my

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uneasiness left me? Leyland's conduct showed more disregard of what was due to his wife than any more grievous wrong to her. Lady Coulthurst was so much less dangerous that her smiles and soft words were so generally bestowed, and Leyland's liking for her, and seeking of her company, had, I perceived, nothing emotional in them. I think that in all probability this was more entirely the case now that he had seen her in her new character amidst her old surroundings, than when he had spoken with overdone carelessness of meeting her in London, and of the intended visit to Banbrook Park. Perhaps Ada had divined that it would be so; perhaps she had dared such a result. And if this it was that actuated her then, I, for my part, cannot find the words for all I have in my heart for it.

And, though not to these thoughtless lookers-on and superficial judges, it altered

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her to some eyes to-day: I saw it. It was at quite the first of my acquaintance with Ada that her beauty used to strike me more constantly; before I knew her as well as I do now—when I no longer think in what respect she is beautiful any more than why I love her: except in occasional moments, when it has become, as it did to-day, a rare fact in itself.

I have said that Ada was not provident of her beauty, as many women are. To-day it was quite otherwise; to-day she was quite aware of it; she wore it about her with exquisite remorselessness, blent it with the soft daring of her thoughts. Yes, these found her a new place in some eyes. Leyland came in at the window and met his wife going out. Looking up, with half-wistful eyes, as though catching at a sigh, she took his arm, and smiling, asked his opinion on some point of the arrangements. He looked down on her

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with a grave new look on his face, and asked her if she was not tiring herself. He was always a kind, courteous fellow, but this was something more than courtesy.

"No, no," said she, with sweet eyes, that had not so much as forgiveness in them, much less upbraiding. "Come and see if the table can be there." And he walked away with her.

He came back after a while through the room where I was, for the moment, alone: on the wall hung a drawing of his wife, that portrait by the young unknown artist. I don't know what thought came into his head, or what induced the pause and the words—but he stopped a minute beneath the picture, and looked at it very earnestly—

"Miss Doughty," he said, "my wife is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen," and left me to wonder not a little, and look back for the inducement to his words.

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I noticed that afterwards he could not comfortably settle himself to follow Lady Coulthurst's caprices as before; several times he came up towards the house and looked about uncertainly for his wife. It was an hour or two later, she was standing in one of the door-ways—her dress that day, I recollect, was of some soft green and white stuff all full of specked and clouded light—and Leyland came suddenly upon her. Ada is not strong in this sense, that fatigue tells quickly upon her: perhaps, too, she had not quite shaken off last week's indisposition.

"You are tiring yourself more than you need," said he, peremptorily. "And you will be taking cold. Where is Dyer? I will get something from her."

He brought back a cloak and put it on her shoulders, and the scarlet drapery fell all about her, and the soft white and green peeped out here and there in relief. There

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is at all times a delicate sumptuousness about Ada which is peculiarly attractive, and when she gets sparkling also she is worth seeing indeed: she lightened so in this moment that I could not help a glad appreciative smile coming on my own face. Leyland seemed in a quiet proud way to be chaffing her, and she to be answering him back with saucy words.

Just then Hill Mathieson came into the room. We were each a little surprise to the other. He had on what I suppose to be his home face and temper; and I have no doubt I looked sufficiently foolish smiling away all to myself. He roused himself quickly, but still he was not quick and able enough to be quite as polite as usual; his words to me were even a species of attack, and the line of attack would never be Hill Mathieson's without a motive more or less under his control. In speaking he crossed to the other side of me, as if casually, but in

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reality to discover what engaged my attention. I devoutly hoped he got rewarded for his slyness.

"Miss Doughty," said he vivaciously, "you are a very unfair person, I consider."

"Indeed, Mr. Mathieson," I coldly replied.

"A very unfair person. For, confess now, have you not set yourself deliberately to *take us all in?*" It was a queer speech, certainly, to have made at haphazard to one in my peculiar position. "Why, from smiling here you are serious, Miss Doughty, when it should be quite the other way. Is my jest so poor that it needs a finger-post over it with 'Here one laughs?'"

Heedlessly as he appeared to speak, he was in that state of secret irritation to have liked to have seen me irritated also. Yes, here was another to whom that day showed Ada changed. I think it was thus. In the

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first of her feeling his evil influence over her husband, she could have quarrelled with him; then, for a little while—but a very little while—she had almost tried to win him. And now if she at last found herself beyond him? Strife and inward vehemence such as hers towards any object, often looks, both to one's self and to others, like despair of obtaining it. Both he and she had perhaps mistaken his power to incite her for power to quell. And if indifference be the one sin against ourselves we can in nowise forgive, it is very sure that Hill Mathieson would be furthest of any from forgiving it if she who committed it were Ada Leyland. That was what his secret irritation meant: now *he* could quarrel with her; if he did not, it was only that he carefully kept himself under control for something worse.

Of course, had I been a suave, properly-disposed person, having failed in my duty in

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the first instance, I should have even hastened to smile as soon as the finger-post was up. But I am afraid I have some very disagreeable traits in my character, and I did no such thing. Moreover, I am quite aware my answer did not carry the most civil meaning.

"I think well enough, Mr. Mathieson, of the generality of the people I see here to be quite sure that it would not be at all hard on them if I did try to take them in, as you call it."

"Hard! no. Oh! I make no imputation," disclaimed he, with shifting eyes.

"But there are just one or two now," I went on to say, with a slight laugh, "of whom I own I should like to take photographs; not common photographs, but of the kind that it is said are in existence of Louis Napoleon and Pio Nono; taken at moments when they were quite unaware that they were even

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overlooked, and most strikingly betraying their real expression."

Let the subject, or its importance to him, be what it might, there was nothing put Hill Mathieson out more than to have his flightiness answered elaborately. At any time I took a perverse pleasure in doing it.

"Ah, yes—clever idea," said he, looking quite angry this time, and trying to speak as if he were not so. I accepted his anger as the greatest compliment. "It's something like Pietro What's-his-name's trick in *Romola*. An artist yourself, are you not?" he added, abruptly.

"Oh, no; nothing more than an amateur."

"Well, I suppose I thought it because you appear to have lived much amongst artists and that sort of people."

"Yes, Mr. Mathieson, but, I imagine, art is infectious in just about the same degree as

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goodness and badness are." I glanced up at him rather sharply as I spoke: for it always made me, with my ill intentions towards himself, a little nervous to have my past life mentioned by Hill Mathieson, and so I daresay I looked wiser than my words.

He looked at me now uncertainly, and said nothing. As I have hinted, Mr. Mathieson had begun sometimes not to know how to answer me: to feel that he was not successful with me.

"Nor are you anything of an artist," said I spitefully to myself, as I watched him away. "You, too, are quite an amateur, Mr. Mathieson, and a sad bungler too."

("Women are so different to men," says Jamie, looking over my shoulder, as I write. "Men like to think their opponents the next most formidable people to themselves."

Of course I don't argue the matter with Jamie; although of course, too, he has no-

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thing to do with my writing, nothing further of what I thought of Mr. Mathieson.)

But I didn't want Hill Mathieson's shadow between my hope and me; so when the tall, upright figure of Mrs. John Rogerson came into the foreground, and I saw her nod brightly to some one in the direction Leyland and his wife had taken, and then come sauntering towards me with a contemplative smile on her gracious face, I gladly put her instead into what I would have my remembrances of that day. And so when every one said the Leylands' party was a great success, I could say so too. Quite as sincerely as some others there could have said it: but that in every case, under all this gaiety and cordiality, everything was quite in harmony, many things forbade me to think. For instance, Mr. John Rogerson, the lawyer, deep in conversation with Mr. Hulyard, let fall, in my hearing, words ominous to the

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prosperity of some one, whom both took care not to name, although their manner plainly showed him to be of the present gathering.

Mr. John Rogerson's fine portly figure, compact head, and red beard of silky fineness, would mark him out in most companies. Mr. Hulyard, a thin man, with a close irascible face, is the senior partner in the late Mr. Hutton's firm as it now exists.

"He doesn't know where to turn himself for money," said Mr. Rogerson, his voice expressing serious annoyance: "there is every appearance of it."

"You won't do anything without my knowledge," Mr. Hulyard returned.

"No, no; I promise you. He will lay hands on everything he can, I have no doubt."

"Thank God that is not much," ejaculated Mr. Hulyard, with asperity. "Stupid fool!"

"There is some one kindly giving him all the assistance to that end in his power," con-

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tinued Mr. Rogerson, slipping his long thin hand down his silky beard, and looking at Mr. Hulyard from under his down-drawn brows. Mr. Hulyard understood him in a moment, and said so by a very expressive shrug of the shoulders.

I heard these words, but gave them no especial meaning. Why should I ?—occasion is given for them by some one or other every day.

Yes, every one said the Leylands' party was quite a success. The Coulthursts returned to London next day, on their way to Paris; the cloud no bigger than a man's hand seemed to melt away out of the Leylands' sky: things of themselves might subside into a comfortable level kind of happiness, and obnoxious elements vanish by evaporation out of the atmosphere: perhaps it is oftenest so.

Yet I think for some a great strong wholesome remorse might make a better life.

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CHAPTER VI.

OVERTAKEN.

"In the dark
Our fortunes meet us."—DRYDEN.

OF course some things I have to tell to make my story clear, could not have happened under my own eyes, but came to my knowledge through various sources, and not at the precise time of occurrence. And the opening phase of the Leylands' great trouble belongs in part to these.

Frank Leyland was in this position, whilst he had a large income, he had no great sum of ready money at his disposal. All Mr. Hutton's property that had not been expressly settled on Ada remained as before in the

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firm, which still went as Hutton, Hulyard, and Wightman, without Leyland having power to alienate it. The small Nether House estate was his own especial property, and that was the most. He was not admitted in the slightest degree into the affairs of the banking firm, and any speculation of his would be—must be—his own loss or profit entirely. Not that any one would have credited him with a speculative turn: he might have ridden over to Borley twenty times as often as he did, and have announced, too, that it was on business with Hill Mathieson, and neither I, nor his wife, nor ninety-nine out of a hundred of his acquaintances, would have thought of stocks and shares, or of any danger to him in them. And, indeed, how often does our real peril await us in the guise in which we expect it, or befall us in the moment when we expect it?

I had even written to Jamie that any

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business I might have had at the Nether House seemed to me done with, so that I ought not in honesty to remain there longer under false colours. But before his reply could reach me it had become obsolete; except as a sad commentary on life. I had foolishly felt some latent mortification because of the little need for me at the Nether House, the little occasion—apart from our desire for a family reunion. To this I could not hope we had much approached; and if I had effected anything beside, by my romantic and slightly extravagant undertaking, I was as yet too near to it to see it. Stern reparation awaited me in the immediate future; for the end came quickly. The mine which shook this household to its centre was sprung under our feet with dreadful suddenness; there was no prologue spoken to this sorrowful first act. The world will marry and give in marriage,

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buy and sell, dance and make merry, yield itself to foolish joys and yet more foolish sorrows, on the very eve of its floods, as long as it be a world at all: who needs to be told it?

And it is only in a few simple facts, shifted into some peculiar position towards each other, that the most terrible tragedies lie.

So Ada made sensitively slight advances towards her husband. And Leyland made journeys to Borley and London, and Audleybury, and was provokingly blind to what his wife showed so shyly of her heart. And Annette and I plodded through dull grammars, and inane histories, and beautifully perplexing geographies. And the sun rose every morning behind where the huge city, with its castle on the hill, stood up high and portentous; and the sun every night set below where the marshes ran a long level line, so that his shining robes, as he swept them together, flashed in light across them,

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across the Nether House, across the trees looking curiously in on it over the brow of the hill, across the purpled woods of Banbrook. Three weeks we counted from the day of the garden-party, and we neither made much of them nor little.

Ada had gone out in the carriage to make several country calls when Leyland came in from Borley. Passing Annette and me in the hall equipped for walking, he gave Annette some absurd mock commission to do for him, if we were going into the city, and stopped when a few paces into the library to tell her, in idle teasing, what an ugly hat she had on. The day's *Times* lay on the table. Still bantering Annette, he took it up, sought a certain column, read a few lines, and ceased talking suddenly. He read on a few lines further—the door was open and we were still detained about something in the hall — uttered a forcible exclamation,

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turned sharply as though we were spying on him, and closed the door in our faces.

There was a message for me when we returned from our walk—Mr. Leyland wished to speak to Miss Doughty as soon as she came in. He would be in the library, would I be good enough to go to him there? And I went at once. Leyland was busy sorting papers, and putting some into a portmanteau, already packed with clothes. He finished his work in that moment, and turning on me so dark and wretchedly perplexed a face as was wholly incomprehensible to me, said,—his voice, even, become quite other than what I had known—"They gave you my message?"

Then he could not at once say anything further: there was both anger and apprehension in the strange disorder of his manner; exceeding self-disgust, too. He closed and locked the portmanteau with

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fierce energy that in itself was something ludicrous, had not the whole been only too plainly quite beyond a laughing matter, and pushed it roughly from him.

"Miss Doughty, I always think you are fond of my wife."

"Yes," said I, shortly. It was quite too surprising a thing, and too passionately asserted, for me to run on into commonplaces as to either the reason or the reality of my affection.

"Because—because"—he went and stood in the window with his back to me—"it is a great thing I am going to ask of you. I am going to London by the two train upon a very bad business: I may not be able to come back for some weeks, perhaps not for—no one can say how long. You must do your best, Miss Doughty, to make it easier for my wife: it is a bad business, a very bad business; it will break her heart, I think"—he

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made a long pause. "You must do your best." I had not a word to utter: it is hard to say what wild flights my fears had not taken in that minute of silence.

"Well, it has to be told: it has to be owned to," said he, at length, trying to speak recklessly, but not able. "Miss Doughty," and resentment came to the aid of his self-disgust in the effort to face me again and be open with me. "I dare say you know what may be done at cards, playing high and losing, as a general rule, nine times out of ten. Well, that has been my trade and my fortune lately. Dipped just about as deeply as I can be, I am. But there—that's nothing to what is to come. I must be persuaded to try making it up to myself by gambling of another kind, which I know even less about. Fool or knave, which most, is a question. I have got mixed up with a lot of men who haven't even a common thief's honour; I have

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been legged by them, I don't doubt, a hundred times. And now they have brought me into an affair which promises to do for the whole party of us. But if I read that villanous letter aright," and he tossed a letter to me, of which the most I saw then was, that it was of Hill Mathieson's writing, "they are going to try all they can to make me the scape-goat. What the business is, I am not so able to say as they would be—whether felony or what; but I must not stand still here at Southwich to be shot at. It is that affair of the Standard Bank,"—pointing to *The Times* on the table. "You will see plenty of it in the papers the next few days, to quite satisfy yourself. They won't be so careful to withhold names to-morrow."

"But if you are clear of it, Mr. Leyland, how can they do you any real harm?"

"But I am not clear," he replied, flushing with angry shame. "I am not clear. I wish

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to God I were: I could find it very easy to make good resolutions then. I did know they were plotting something not quite above-board, and I was to have reaped indirect benefit from it. But I declare I did *not* know it was any such absolute, unmitigated, rascally fraud as this. Strong language won't avail me much now though, Miss Doughty"—pulling himself up with a moody smile, and falling into a minute's dismal silence. "Well, you can't call me a more wretched fool than I know myself to be, in more ways than you think of. But I must be off; and if there be anything to be done to soften this to my wife, you will do it, will you not? I have always thought you like her," said he, very earnestly. "I think you get on with one another. I am asking of you what I can never repay, Miss Doughty; but you will do it?"

"Yes, yes," said I, hastily, as if protesta-

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tions and declarations were never worth while. "But what do you mean doing, Mr. Leyland? If you are away long Mrs. Leyland will join you, I presume. And would it not be so much better," I ventured to say, "oh, so much better, to break it to her yourself—even if you came down on purpose?"

"Better—perhaps yes," said he, in a hard bitter voice. He had taken a chair now and was sitting with gloomy, almost sullen eyes on the ground. "Now that might be the finest sarcasm. Perhaps I am scarcely in the habit of heeding so much what is best."

I did not dispute it. "But when you mean quite otherwise now," I did say, warmly, as though I could not doubt it; "it makes what I said, everything, so different." I put it in that vague form; for what he would call preaching was the last thing to tell with Frank Leyland. I felt quite old

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in counsel with these two young mistaken, wrong-headed folks on my hands.

"Oh, I am not at all sure what I mean," he returned, yet more gruffly, with a half-savage obstinacy which I laid simply to his miserable sense of his own weakness and folly. Only then out of his trouble and difficulty he suddenly gave me a new meaning to it—a meaning that I had never so much as guessed at, to it and much else. He began pacing the room with long quick steps; after a time he stopped and stood in the window looking out, as at the first. "Do you want me to say to you," he burst out, in a voice stormy with passion of some kind, "what I have been saying to myself every day of my life this last two years, and never fulfilling? Where's the use?—when I can't begin straight. Look here," and now he turned towards me as if it would be a satisfaction even to him to meet to the

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full my scornful judgment on him; "I may be a great fool for it, but I *can't* meet the contempt on my wife's face: I dare not try it. I know I should go straight away and drown myself," with a fierce sweep of his arm towards the river lying still and invisible below the garden.

Yes, there are very, very few of us who have come so far as to see clearly, absolutely, that the humiliation is not in the confession and the penalty, but in the wrong-doing itself. Well, I suppose to have come so far we must, too, have become as Judas or the Magdalene.

But it was a strange manifestation, this of Frank Leyland's—as made to me especially strange. And there were a hundred things in it, too, that I cannot describe: I looked wonderingly at him, but with anything rather than scorn.

"Then do you know," said I, very deli-

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berately, and with grave purpose—considering how much I must be moving in the dark, I scarcely know now if I was right or justified—"then do you know you are playing exactly into Mr. Mathieson's hands? Do you know, that if Mr. Mathieson could see any breach between you and your wife, his very object would be attained; so far as he has any object besides,"—womanlike, not being able to resist making a dash at my adversary on my own account—"besides getting the best of every bargain for himself?"

Leyland at first looked overwhelmingly astonished. But feelings such as were almost sure to be the first-fruits of my words are never very slow to grow in our hearts. Leyland's face darkened; then with still bolder hand I cut away at everything that could ever again spring up to form the old conditions.

"Sir, there is one thing Mr. Hill Mathie-

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son will never forgive you—that your wife's choice fell on you, and not on him. This is what a very great deal has meant."

I have always felt that Frank Leyland, in his many failings, was to be more leniently dealt with, seeing that he showed himself capable of honouring things to him scarcely more tangible than abstract qualities; and that now, in the very face of so ugly a fact, brought home to him with purposed abruptness, he had not a doubt of his wife's absolute good faith, even in his exaggerated anger. Was I wise, or foolish and culpable —with so little knowledge of the inner workings of some things as I had—in so bringing this fact home to him? If he had gone from her to-day, with that last hope and sense of better things taken from him by ill-judged words, could I ever have forgiven myself?

"Mind," he said, in that tone which when

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men use we are warned and obey—he was now neither restless nor fierce, but slow and dogged, and quite understanding himself—"Mind, that Mathieson shall not come here with his false, lying, cozening pretences. If I know that he come when I am away, I will shoot him the first time I meet him." Yet he was in all his thoughts loyal to Ada. Even when he said—and it must have been a bitter mood indeed to overcome the bitterness of such an admission—"You must not think me too much of a coward"—he had put Mathieson out of the discussion, as easily as a man can who knows his mind concerning a thing. "My wife did not accept me because she had any love for me, but because she was bid by Mr. Hutton. She would have gone to the end of the world for Mr. Hutton. I'll never ask her to do it for me: I'll not stoop so low as that yet. She would go. If I had to

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keep in hiding now, and I were to send for her to join me, no matter where it was, under what disreputable circumstances, she would come; she would not hesitate even: it is in her nature to be true. But she could never hide from me what I could not endure to see."

"I don't tell you this without an object," he went on, by his manner choosing to take it out of the sphere of argument. "I can guess what you are going to say: I know better than you. I am not quite a desperate man yet. If I get out of this, please God, I will keep out of such scrapes for the future; and, perhaps, in time I may be able so to earn her respect that I may tell her and still hold up my head. But I don't think much of my chance: read that—that—Mathieson's letter, and judge for yourself. Don't tell my wife unless I write for you to do so; that is why I have said so much as I have to you.

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I will leave word that I am gone to London on business. If the worst come, God knows what my plans will be; I will write by the last post as much as I can. Annette, child, a kiss;" he was in the hall and bidding Annette good-by in the act of speaking. "Miss Doughty, take care of them."

I had never thought Frank Leyland's voice could bear so much repressed pain. But then my discernment had not sufficed to detect, even unintelligently, the evidence of the carking sense he now showed himself to have so long had of Ada's supposed indifference. A secret leavening element it had been, doubtless, in many an unwise course; although the idea would never before have so completely formed itself in his mind as now in the moment of giving utterance to it.

A groom waited outside with the dog-cart to drive his master to the station; the

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next minute the horse's hoofs were beating time to the heavy throbbing of my heart, as a dull sense awoke in me that there had been a moment in which a few strong affirming words might have changed the world for these two; but that I had failed to wrest that moment from him, and now it must go on all to the sorrowful end.

Ay, but a great, strong, wholesome remorse is not to be chaffered for, to be given as the product of so many words, to be bought with money and a price.

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CHAPTER VII.

SO RUNS THE BOND.

"Alack, for lesser knowledge!"—*Winter's Tale.*

It is as well here that I go back to the precise circumstances of Leyland's danger, to what *The Times* told him, and why it was of such startling moment to him—ante-dating, it is true, my own acquisition of the entire facts, which was necessarily too piecemeal for me to follow the order of it.

Leyland coming in from Borley, from an actual consultation with Hill Mathieson himself, and taking up *The Times* of the day, saw that the money-article contained an announcement by the directors of the Royal Northern Standard Bank, that some ill-dis-

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posed person or persons had forwarded a certain telegram to Manchester, where was their head-office, seriously affecting the credit of the bank, and hinting at a probable suspension of payments. Quite a panic had ensued on the northern Exchanges, which, at first, threatened to bring about the very result hinted at. The directors spoke of having a clue to the concoctors of the telegram, and expressed a determination to hold them up, upon discovery, to public opprobrium, and, if it were possible, to obtain legal redress.

We could have been scarcely out of the house before Leyland was off to Borley again as fast as his good horse could carry him, hoping to catch Hill Mathieson before he should leave by train for Audleybury, as in the morning he had expressed his intention of doing. Half-way on the road he met a messenger from him with a note,

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which sent Leyland back a wiser, and an unhappy man. I saw him on his return; that two hours could have thus sent to the winds all his lightness of heart, his apparent invincibleness to more than the most trifling embarrassment, seemed a marvel indeed. All his life having desired, as it has been well put, to say Yes *and* No, instead of Yes *or* No; now at last come by force of such habit to that point when option of answer to the untoward fact was no longer for him.

"My good fellow," this note of Mathieson's ran; "what have you been about? This is not a business I can have anything to do with, so I tell you beforehand. And I think, too, you will find you have overreached yourselves, and that the game is not worth the candle: the directors have been too quick for you. The instant I read their announcement I saw your hand and Druce's in it;

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but, of course, I don't need to say that you may trust me to keep dark. Have you been losing at écarté again? Else what could possess you to do it?—not my words the other day, I should hope. They were not meant so; stock-jobbing of the kind you have taken to patronizing is not in my line exactly. It is worse than écarté by a good many: be thankful if, this time, you escape by the skin of your teeth, and don't try it again.

"I can't be seen openly in the affair, because of our firm, you understand; but if I can be of any service to you, you know where to write me. I would come over, only I suppose you will be off to London immediately.

"Yours sincerely,

"HILL MATHIESON."

When he had read the letter through Leyland sat staring stupidly at it; stared as

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stupidly after the messenger, now fast receding in the distance; then he turned his horse's head homewards, slowly, his faculties benumbed; his mind always going back to the beginning of this wretched business, but never getting past the first facts and this letter. I suppose he rode so a quarter of a mile or more. Then he roused himself, with something of fright almost, and read the letter again—mastering it this time only too fully. Leyland swore aloud some very terrible things; he laughed to himself with bitter affectation of admiration over the boldness of the falsehood in the letter from beginning to end! "'Can't be seen openly in it.' 'Will be of service to me if he can!' Good Lord, what a premium the fellow ought to be at! As if he had not been the prime mover in it: as if I would have moved a step, or stirred a finger, to come by a man's money dishonestly."

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A wisdom-mongering, foolish world! We go picking our way through broad sloughs of deeds of doubtful seeming, and then wonder very painfully that their mire stains our feet.

But then Leyland felt that he had no time for expletives, but must be deliberating; and he brought himself to be cool—as one can when there is the unfortunate necessity. He was a shrewd fellow enough, although a very weak, foolish one. He did not disguise from himself that he was in a very difficult, almost dreadful position. And he did not doubt that Hill Mathieson had done his best to put him in it; he had no doubt of Mathieson's utter faithlessness and villany. But he could not see that he could bring it home to him, and he could see how this telegram might very possibly be fastened on himself. In the first place, he could not meet it with clean hands; he had known more of it than any honourable man should; he had known

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the reasons and intent of that announcement in *The Times'* money-article better than any honourable man should have known them, away from the scene of their origin. He had known Druce was an unscrupulous man; and if there were any money to be gained, he had allowed it to be inferred that he should not be so nice about the course Druce or any other man might take to loosen it from where it lay. He had even given him an introduction or two, whilst being well aware they were not wanted for the best purpose in the world. That was the extent, neither more nor less, of what he had done, and Mathieson, he knew, had gone further, much further into it. But then he had an uneasy impression that Mathieson would be much more clever at extricating himself than he knew how to be; that Mathieson would never have dared to write that letter if he had not already destroyed all traces of his underground

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workings; and that he, Leyland, had been purposely drawn into it to aid him, if need were, in so doing. If it were ever in his power, vowed Leyland, Mathieson should feel the weight of his indignation; if the coward had not been off to Audleybury he should have felt his whip across his shoulders that morning, pressed for time as he was. But now—the brazen scamp had kept count of his chances of immunity every way—he must be off to London at once to see Druce, and learn what mischief was afoot.

Up to this time Leyland was, I think, prepared to take the consequences with something of audacity, if not of bravery. He had always been a fortunate fellow, had often lighted on his feet, when all the laws of gravitation said he ought to fall on his head, and break his neck. And it had had its effect on him. But now, so soon as his plans began to arrange themselves with

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any detail, came the thought of his wife and how she would accept his ignominy, to take all courage and completion from his plans, as such thoughts had taken all courage and completion from his daily life. For that she would accept it he knew, as part and parcel of what she had accepted with him. And at once he told himself that because of this, it must then be quite impossible to him "to begin straight;" but even in determining his inability, he put, we must own, a higher meaning on things than at any former moment.

I do not myself think people are often very reasonable in moments of great peril; at all events, there is often a great mixture of unreason with their reason. So, in effect, Leyland, by criminally reckless pilotage, having risked his reputation and honourable place among men, surrendered, bit by bit, his pleasant ease, his careless

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dallying with awkward facts; was willing, and made up his mind, to do almost anything that the case might urge on him to win back the reality of honour, when it came to him to think that his unhappy weakness must be visited on another who was altogether innocent in it. It did not come to him to think that this was not the first time it had been so: for past follies he had taken a sort of absolution to himself, in the notion that no one suffered but himself. He had always forgiven himself on the unconscious plea, that he owed his wife nothing—except, perhaps, on an occasion or two lately, when he had had glimmerings of something different, which had never, however, so much as passed into ideas. But now, by his own act and deed, he required of his wife, what it seemed impossible for him ever to atone to her for, and yet what brought him neither satisfaction nor pleasure: what he would most gladly

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have absolved her from. His self-contempt, because of it, was almost, nay, quite debasing. In the coin of duty he had asked of her the uttermost farthing, and she would pay it —only too well and faithfully. And when paid, it would have no comfort nor value to him, was only so much dross, because it had not the unique stamp of a higher mint.

He wavered this way and that way, because of the tormenting thought of it; and yet, in an access of obstinate unreason, he absolutely refused, let it necessitate what it would, to face this consequence. It was the one thing he was in no doubt about. Let it behove him ever so to be brave before his wife and with regard to her, he could not be it. The faultiness and the extenuation you may be able to mete out. I confess I am not able. I only think that if things went quite right on this earth we should scarcely seek a heaven.

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CHAPTER VIII.

AS BY FIRE.

"I wist not what to do,
Or how to speak to her."—*Excursion.*

I WAS to keep my own counsel as towards Ada, at all events, until I heard from Mr. Leyland by the last post at night. Whether or not I agreed with such a silence towards the one most nearly concerned, I had no option in it: nothing, however, in the confidence reposed in me forbade me, that I saw, from writing to Jamie. Certainly I should not get any authorisation, so that I might do it at once as well as at any time. And I wrote him a long letter, if only as a relief from the responsibility that at last I

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had in fulness enough to make even the most self-sufficient chary of it.

Ada was not back until late, as she had stayed luncheon with Mrs. Bushe; and I did not see her until dinner. Annette was gone to spend the rest of the day with some play-fellows in the city, but I had a message to dine with Mrs. Leyland. It was a curious meal; a sufficient effort to make me not sorry I had come so little in contact with her previously on that day. I could not get it out of my head that she would ask some sudden question I should find it difficult to answer. Of course it was an entirely imaginary dilemma; her husband had left word for her, as he had promised me, that he was called to London on urgent business; she was not likely to discuss his going, with her governess. But then her ignorance and my intelligence seemed so much an inversion of the right state of things, that

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no wonder they were in themselves a trouble to me and tormented me.

Our last postal delivery at Southwich is very late, and I was considering whether I could not get away beforehand to my own room, when the footman brought in the one letter. He was bringing it to me, but he being nearer his mistress, she put out her hand for it, and, a glance at the superscription telling her her mistake, passed it on to me. Fortunately the address was a great scrawl, so that only a moment, if at all, did her glance linger on it: that moment was quite long enough for my comfort. I opened my letter as carelessly as I might, and Ada resumed her book.

"It is worse than the worst I had supposed," wrote Mr. Leyland, evidently in the extremest haste and perturbation of mind. "The bank was so near being stopped that

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the directors are furious. My name is openly mentioned in connection with it—my name and Druce's. Mathieson's is not heard at all: something keeps even Druce silent where Mathieson is concerned; and as for me, whose small part in it the rascal could scarcely have known without that ten thousand times greater rascal telling him—he even helps towards getting me thought guilty. If that were all there might be some policy in it, as, if he get some one in the hole with him who has a good deal to lose, the efforts sure to be made to save the other must in part tell for Druce too. But why screen Mathieson?

"There is something I can't understand in it; I have set the best man to work I know, and until things look brighter I must out of England. It is a wretched business; make it as little wretched for my wife as you can. I can sometimes almost thank God that, after the first feeling of disgrace is over, she will not feel

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it as some wives would. I don't look much for exoneration; I shall not care much what becomes of me: it is the first time within my knowledge that the name of Leyland has been dishonoured. My father might be unfortunate, but there was not one word to be said against his honour.

"I must go where something is doing, or I shall go to the devil at once: there is no one to break their hearts about me at all events, except perhaps little Annette, and children don't break their hearts—I scarcely know what I am writing. It is my own fault if my wife has nothing now for me but contempt. I send her all my love, and tell her that all the while I have known she was better than any beside. I take the Hamburg steamer to-night. I will write to her as soon as I am safe from immediate apprehension.

"Yours faithfully,

"FRANCIS LEYLAND."

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Disturbed and uncomfortable almost beyond bearing, quite beyond concealment if Ada had thought to look, I sat apparently occupied with my letter — the wild unfortunate letter that I felt more strongly than ever ought to have been written to no one but his wife, that was just a summary of the writer's weakness and incertitude, of all that was deplorable in the relations between the husband and wife: anything higher and stronger in it ran in a very slow and doubtful current, and quite latently. And this—almost grievous—letter, was to be the plea for, and groundwork of my action—my interposition in matters of that kind to which the law applies most forcibly that the stranger shall not intermeddle.

I looked anxiously at Ada with a dozen forms of speech on my lips in as many minutes. There are persons of whom, if you asked yourself, "How would one now

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have to go about to comfort that person in trouble?" you could not know what to answer in the least. And it makes one a terrible coward when, to such a person one has to, as it were, administer the trouble first. How should I utter it? What words could I find colourless enough, and yet capable to carry my message? How I should see her suffer!—it was not possible that she should take it slightly, the case being what it was, she being what she was. And so engrossed, too, was she by her book or her thoughts; so unconscious of any special trouble afoot: surely the most difficult person in the world to reach. There was something to me quite pitiable in the reserve and proud self-isolation expressed even in the still bent head, the attitude of apparently entire calm. She changed her position, leaning back in her chair, so that the full light came on the pale pure beauty of her face.

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Oh, it was cruel work! cruel work enough to raise all sorts of angers and vengeances within me; but it had to be done. I compelled myself to speak.

"Mrs. Leyland!" She lifted up her eyes; all the lines of her face were indifferent and passive.

But she saw I was in great disquietude. "You have had bad news? Is it anything in which I can help you?" Instantly she showed a sweet kind face, and there were tones in her voice few would have imagined, who had not seen and noted her with her servants, and the poorer people, and Annette. She thought the trouble mine, and I had to tell her it was mine only insomuch that it was hers!

"The letter is from Mr. Leyland," I said, or something of the sort. I fear I blundered at it very much.

There was nothing melo-dramatic in what

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she did. A looker-on, twenty yards away, would have been far from thinking that a heart was nigh to breaking before his eyes; so slight was all the form of expression this heart knew. She swayed a moment in her chair, turning pale even in her paleness, and let the book drop from her hands, but quite noiselessly. Then, with an instant's strength, she half rose to her feet, and sought to meet my face; a thousand emotions flooded her eyes, and yet there was not a tear in them.

"Mr. Leyland is gone—"

"Not with—" the words scarcely uttered, were checked even in the uttering them, and she sank back into her chair and bowed her face in her hands. Then I knew how great and continual my darling's grief had been, and how much greater it would be.

"Mr. Leyland is gone to London on business," I went on, without any answering emotion in my voice—it would have been

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too injurious. "He called me into the library before he started—when you were out. He told me as much as he was able then, so that I could tell you in case it were necessary. It is something to do with banks; I scarcely know what—with the Royal Northern Standard Bank." The shiver that ran through her whole frame told what a relief it was from her first thought. "There is a great deal about it in *The Times*," I continued, "and that is how Mr. Leyland knew. There have been some false reports spread, and he must go abroad until it is shown it is not he,—at least he had something, unfortunately, to do with it, only not what they say he had."

Then I told her of his going over to Borley, and of what Hill Mathieson had written and done, and what her husband had hoped from the journey to London, and how his hopes had not been fulfilled. I told it

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with quick words, staying now and then; but it seemed, for any movement she would make, I might go on for ever: her stillness almost frightened me.

But quite suddenly she lifted up her head and asked me for the letter, without my at all expecting it. I don't see that I could have withheld it; what sufficient excuse, what excuse that could have been less provocative of doubt and pain than the letter itself, I could have invented; but it had quitted my hands, and only then I thought of those sad words—those dreadful words for a wife to read—"I could almost thank God that it will not touch my wife as it would some wives;" and I had nearly asked for it back.

I knew when she came to them. She took the letter and leaned back in her chair for the shortest space—it was like her to spare herself, reserve herself, as it were, until the blurred lines could have words and a

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meaning for her,—when she came to those words her hand began to shake so, I thought she could not have gone on; but there is no telling what courage and endurance and capacity for forgiveness there is in this slight, delicate woman's heart: for she is not facile, but slow to express them. She went quite through with the letter; only then laying it down, she dropped her head into her hands again and there came such long, striving, anguished sobs as I never thought to hear.

There was Annette's step in the hall; and I went out quietly, and, of my own accord, told her that Mrs. Leyland was engaged and would come to her room to bid her good-night. I waited to let the child gratify herself by giving a full and particular account of her evening's doings. When I returned the room had grown darker, and Ada sat looking with level brows of pain abroad over the marshland, where the melancholy pollards

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ran out in long far lines, like sentinels, against a high wall of sky with a coping of light. "What a beautiful dread home the angels have!" sighed a simple soul to me one day, looking out on another such sky. But then she was thinking with all her troubles of earth in her thoughts, too.

The letter was moved from where it had lain, and I guessed how it would have been read again whilst I had been away. In a quiet resolved voice, so governed as to appear almost patient, without turning her head, she said:—

"There was something else. What else did he say? You must tell me."

I hesitated, but I felt rather than saw a slight stern movement, and I yielded, as every one finds it difficult not to do with Ada when she means one should.

"Mr. Leyland said he was not brave enough to meet his wife." But she was

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waiting for more, with that same controlled impatience. And so I spared not to say all: "His wife had not married him for love of him, but for love of others, and because she was bid by them. And he could not endure to meet the contempt he would see in her face let her try to hide it ever so." I said it with slow speech, dully amazed at myself.

I have never gone far enough on so dark a road, to know the meaning and interpretation of that dreary, bitter, long silence. I have had my troubles, but not in this form—when one scarcely knows whose the arraignment is, and one can scarcely tell which way the answer shall be most terrible.

She made a commonplace remark about Annette, and said she would go to the child; she did not suppose she should return to the drawing-room again that evening, and was going out with a polite dignified "Good-

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night, Miss Doughty," as if I was to be put back by an inflection of the voice into my old place of governess and she mistress. For the moment it was too strong for me. My heart told me what she would be at. I knew that I had approached, so hurriedly I could scarce tell the steps, to one of those supremely sacred revelations so perilous in their exquisite sensitiveness that no wonder they who involuntarily utter them shrink in pain from making them confidences. I could understand how, with shivering passionate soul she sought to put our different circumstances between me and such a consummation. I could never have forgiven myself if I had allowed her to succeed. But the thought of those weary, weary watches of the night to which she was going, helpless to alter anything, too hopeless to turn to any one, put off my powerlessness from me. I was at her side with my hand on her arm.

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"Oh, my dear, my dear!"

She half faced round; she looked as if another word would kill her.

"Oh, let me be," she passionately besought, with sudden wringing of the hands, —"let me be till the morning."

I dare say I was incomprehensible enough. "Yes, yes," I said, and put my arms round her and kissed her. We were never, never governess and mistress to one another again.

She went; but I could not go at once. Standing there where I had seen it all befall, I could better gather it up into my heart. Strength and wisdom I should indeed want to meet the morning. Well, I am something of the temperament of Elias, although there are few who divine it: not George and Jamie even, good pious men though they are; Jamie especially, who has these many years conveyed to my mind the notion of

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Carlyle's Cromwell—"henceforth a Christian man, believing in God, not on Sundays only, but on all days, in all places, and in all cases." Jamie says, "You, Jane, in your good, dear, homely way, get through with things that others might despair of." I may smile over the description, but quite as much to feel how he has fallen wide of the mark. But one is so rarely appreciated for what in one deserves appreciation: even with our dearest and those who best understand us, our good character is too often a caricature of the real good in us. It is one of those things we look to have altered, though; that is the fine hope before us, when our waiting shall be done.

But see how things happen: see what our work means for us. I rose in the morning prepared to devise some feeble tentative measure, and the matter was done for me, without any intervention of mine

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either. Ada had sent me word that she should breakfast in her own room; perhaps I would come and speak to her before I went to lessons. I thought that if Jamie had been at home the previous evening at the time my letter reached South Carr Street, I might get a hasty word of advice and sympathy from him this morning, and I waited until post was in before I went to Ada, sending Annette off to the schoolroom a few minutes in advance so that I might be alone with my letter. And I needed to have been alone with it, for when it came it was a letter to touch one's heart so that the face showed it. Jamie had seen in the papers, and heard talked of, all the public particulars of Leyland's delinquency, even before he had received my account of those more private. He is a very practical man, in spite of the profound nature of his studies, and he measured its importance and danger at once.

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Now it so happens, taken with relation to the rest, it is, I think, one of the most singular and beautiful of circumstances,—it so happens that Mr. Bayliss, the man to have the most influence of any other in this unhappy affair, as not only a prince among mercantile men, but more especially as being chairman of the board of directors of this very Royal Northern Standard Bank, considers himself so bound to us, Doughtys, as to have the *right* to be the first asked to aid us in any difficulty, or towards any desire of ours.

But that you should see the full beauty and singularity of it I ought to go back two years—to the time of our dear brother Wat's illness and death.

In the heart of great sorrows lie often deep joys—be sure of it. Our Wat was younger than Jamie and older than I. He was a lieutenant in the navy; a splendid sailor and a dear fellow. In the same ship

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with Wat was Hugh Bayliss, Mr. Bayliss' only son; he was younger than Wat and lower than he in command: I have always liked Hugh very much. One day, when the ship was in those Southern seas, there was a cry of "Man overboard," and Wat hastening up saw it was Hugh Bayliss—and Hugh could not swim. There were dozens of the men who would have thought nothing of jumping overboard to his help, but that morning there had been talk of sharks seen round the ship, and at that very moment those who were most forward saw a sheer-jawed, white-finned monster cleave his way up through the water, and even the bravest of them were kept back. Only not Wat.

Turning for one moment a quiet, smiling, steadfast face to his shipmates—a farewell face for certain, as one called it afterwards, with a choking in his throat—he caught up a rope and—Hugh and I talk it over some-

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times, as this one and that one have told it for us, until it is to us almost as though we had been lookers-on—Wat caught up a rope, clambered overboard, and two minutes afterwards he had Hugh Bayliss in his grasp; as they were being drawn up the side of the ship, they could hear the snapping of the cruel jaws within an inch of them. Both of them were safe from the shark and the sea; yet Wat—I believe he knew it from the first—had met with his death. His hands were too taken up with supporting Hugh for him to be able to guide himself as the two were being drawn up, and he had got entangled with the rope, and short as the pressure of it had been, it had done him mortal injury. No one noticed it at the time; he said nothing of it. He went through the voyage and came home to us, cheerful as ever, and apparently in the most robust health—until the excitement and exhilaration

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of the first days were over, and then he flagged at times as a broad-built, brown-faced fellow like he was ought not to do: could not care for things though he tried ever so.

And Jamie began to be anxious about him, not very anxious though; not so anxious but that when he asked him, for his, Jamie's, and my satisfaction, to consult a physician, he did it in rather a deprecating tone, as though Wat might very naturally take it as something of an insult in his fine manhood. But Wat said not a word of refusal or disinclination; and it was he, not Jamie, who sought to guard his brother against the too sudden effect of the physician's opinion; and it was Jamie, not Wat, who broke down utterly upon it. Wat might live three months: that is what Dr. Houbron said.

And it was Wat who made Jamie and me brave enough to support it cheerfully.

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He talked to us openly about it; he would not let us put it away out of sight. It is a wonder how he had kept up the appearance of strength so long; what he suffered in doing it we can scarcely tell. He told us now that there had been many and many a time when he could have been glad to have lain down on the deck and just be let die there as he lay.

I shall never forget when Mr. Bayliss and his son came to see Wat, after they had heard. Wat had not intended Hugh should ever know, but Mr. Bayliss was a friend of Dr. Houbron's, and the doctor had told him. There sat dear Wat with his thin face and courageous eyes—Wat had fallen very quickly, and as though it were a great relief to him, into all the habits of an invalid. And there was Mr. Bayliss, the tears running down his face, strong accustomed man of the world though he was; with no words to utter

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even : stricken to silence with the sad sense of his helplessness to avert this last, greatest sacrifice made for his son. And behind was poor Hugh, just out of his boyhood, and having to see and ponder this extreme example of a great, most trying mystery. It was very painful for Hugh, but the words Wat spoke to him in that hour are something added to him for life.

And after this, and because of this, Mr. Bayliss cannot thank us enough when we make any request to him : he only quarrels with us that what we do ask of him is rarely personal enough to satisfy what he feels in his heart towards us and ours. Well, Jamie knowing that Mr. Bayliss could almost do what he pleased in the matter, went without delay to him, and telling him, in confidence, the relation Leyland bore to us, threw himself on his generosity, and made the great request to him, that he would save Leyland,

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our sister's, Wat's sister's husband, if it were in his power, from prosecution. When I think of why Jamie could ask it, what looked a very sorrowful loss and memory to be borne with what resignation one might, becomes a very beautiful, yes, even a very joyful thing: my mind rests on it. "I would not barter the bitterness thereof for much that is sweet and delightful."

Jamie did not expect, he scarcely desired, Mr. Bayliss to accede wholly there and then. So high-principled a man, one to have so strong a sense of an obligation rendered, could only be very severe on what Leyland had done. He said he would do what he could do in honour and conscience: they had one ground in common, these two men, and this was promise and requirement enough for both.

But then Jamie received my letter, and went with that to Mr. Bayliss. Fortunately

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what I had been able to say in mitigation of Leyland's guilt, seemed to have great weight with Mr. Bayliss; for, perhaps, just because the occasion of his obligation was so much his own, he felt called upon to be more rigid where other interests beside his own were as much concerned. Mr. Bayliss now could go so far as to give his word, that if Leyland's statement were proved correct, no criminal proceedings should be taken against him; he even put it into a letter to Jamie, for Ada's more complete assurance—which letter Jamie now enclosed.

"The next thing is," Jamie wrote in his own letter to me, "to get Leyland home again. I do so want that this household should be set *right* with itself. If only something could come from his wife! But she has so much to forgive, one could hardly *suggest* it. Yet some of you women, Jane, have these fine impulses." I could fancy

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Jamie, dear old fellow, writing that sentence, and laying down his pen after it was written, and thinking it over for a short space, in a kind of fervour of assertion and acknowledgment.

"Some of you women have these fine impulses." When I went up to her, Ada was at her writing-table, writing a hasty, passionate, scornful letter, as I afterwards knew, to Hill Mathieson. A letter to drive him, in the whirlwind of its hot searing words, to disclose the truth. A strangely unwise step, as most of us take it. But I have often marvelled since whether it would have stopped there; whether it would not have gone on to be the most perilous element of any; for there was so much inadvertency in the one man, and so much force, if not strength, in the other. But any thoughts of mine on the matter are of little importance, seeing that the opportunity for testing them never came.

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The letter never went. I doubt whether it was ever more than a seeking of relief for the poor, strained, helpless heart. As I entered, she, with hot shaking hands, tore it into a hundred fragments. For she saw by my face I had something to tell.

"Oh, so much better news than we could have expected," I said, without any beating about the bush; feeling that my tidings were the best sedative. "It is made so much easier than one could have imagined possible."

"How, how?" she cried, with restless turnings of the hands, fighting hard against her agitation. "Has my husband written again then?" There were for the moment anger and vengeance in my heart again, to see how, as a matter of course and without any thought of self, she could have taken such a thing. But then, perhaps, she didn't at all need that I should be angry for her.

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"No," said I, "it's from Jamie I have heard: Jamie went to Mr. Bayliss—and Mr. Bayliss is everything in it—and Jamie got him to promise that no proceedings should be taken against Mr. Leyland. And Mr. Bayliss was so thoughtful as to write a letter to that effect expressly to assure you." And I gave her a warm kiss as I handed her the letter, to make her feel what assurance I myself had of it.

That Ada was looking at Mr. Bayliss' letter, rather than reading it, did not stop me in my explanations. "You must not think, dear Mrs. Leyland, but that Mr. Bayliss will do even more than he promises. For if Jamie make any request to him, and there is nothing why he may not do it, there are reasons why his whole heart will be in the doing of it."

"Your kindness is so great, Miss Doughty," faltered Ada, with the tears in her

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eyes, "that I don't seem able to even understand it. And who is Jamie, that I may at least try to thank him?"

There was an answer I could have made, and I had almost given it; but "Jamie is my brother," I said, a little abruptly.

"And you wrote to him?" returned Ada, with still more tremulous voice. "And he has interested himself in it as if it was his or your personal affair? Does it come naturally to all you Doughty people to be so kind?"

"There are only us two that I know," I returned, dryly. "And whether it comes natural to us, or how much kindness we two own between us, I am too busy mostly to have ascertained." Ada almost smiled and fell away into thought. I did not ask whether or not I should stay. I sat reading other letters I had received.

"I don't quite understand," said Ada,

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by and by, hesitating not a little, evidently desirous to let as much go by implication as could. "You know more about these things than I do. I wish, Miss Doughty, you would tell me."

I explained all to her as truthfully and delicately as was in my power: she listening attentively, without remark, only shrinking within herself perceptibly when I came to any actual delinquency on her husband's part. After which she was silent a long while. Except for now and then a pitiful word under her breath, "Poor fellow! poor fellow!" And if it had been this that sent Frank Leyland away, not daring, not able to face it, I do not know whether, had I been he, I could have done otherwise.

"Some of you women have these fine impulses." I was thinking, could I give Ada the idea of herself doing something, and

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that the morning was getting away, when Ada interposed:

"If I could but get a letter to him, Miss Doughty. It would be something: a little. Oh, it must be so hard for him." And she began crying very much.

"Then, if you write," said I, assuming a very matter-of-fact tone, "I would, if I were you, send a letter direct to Hamburg,"—for, of course, that remark in Jamie's letter had set me thinking over the possibility of this, and I had in a measure prepared myself with what to suggest—"and another through my brother. He knows all sorts of people—ship-captains and agents and common sailors, too. They come to him with word of things they have observed, and specimens. I shouldn't at all wonder if a letter, sent through him, finds Mr. Leyland first."

"Thank you, oh, so much. Indeed, Miss Doughty, you think of everything."

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"No, I don't," said I, perversely. "I don't. I haven't thought of Annette. Poor child, she will have learned her lessons ten times over." And I left Ada to write.

And this is what she wrote, this girl-wife, with her many wrongs and her narrowed instruction; this is what her heart taught her to write, where half her world would have enlisted pride rather than tenderness. Yes, indeed,

> "This love puts its hand out in a dream
> And straight outstretches all things."

Here is the dear subtle letter that she wrote:—

"MY DEAREST HUSBAND,—Have I done so ill in love and duty towards you that you cannot have me with you now? My heart aches so with the fear, I don't know how to bear it. And so, if you don't want me in

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your trouble, I want you in mine. Dear husband, there are very kind friends at work for us, and Mr. Bayliss, who can manage anything about that bank, has promised that you shall be let alone. He has written to me to say so. It was through Miss Doughty's brother. Indeed I think you might come home to-morrow without any danger. But I don't understand these things much, and so lest I should mislead you, I won't attempt to explain. But if you let Mr. James Doughty know your address, he will be able to tell you all—James Doughty, Esq., 9, South Carr Street.

"Dearest Frank, if you can't come home directly, let me come to you—do let me.

"Your very, very loving wife,

"ADA LEYLAND."

This is how I came to know what was in this letter. Frank showed it to Jamie. He

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had it jealously guarded amongst his most precious possessions, and he brought it out one day to show to Jamie. Jamie said, "There is one person to whom I should like to show this. May I take it to her?" Frank said shortly, "Yes. I don't want to tell you to be careful of it. Not but what I think I could write it down from beginning to end, word for word, if it were to be lost. Could I ever forget it?" Jamie says *he* can never forget it.

Now I see that I had come down to Southwich with something in my heart of that worst, most insidious form of Phariseeism: "I am better than others, than this sister of mine, because I am humbler." Bring dust and ashes, bring dust and ashes; let me put myself low indeed.

"Humility's so good, when pride's impossible."

I have some theories about Ada; theories

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which, if correct, solve not a few things in her character for me.

Mr. Hutton had a strong notion of discipline, although a peculiar one. It was not easy to be quite spoiled, in the sense of being humoured, with him: he must have been authoritative, although not arbitrary; and if one took to resistance, one might break one's self in pieces against the iron wall of his will without shaking him or it. And when one came to know Ada one could see how this had gone to the formation of her character. Ada as a girl might have had her girl's caprices innumerable, even towards Mr. Hutton himself; but she did not take permission for them, she received it. It is in my judgment this very singleness of rule and obedience—not perhaps the first thought one gets of it, but the thought that comes out of it, as it were—that has given Ada that decided character and—well, lack of tolerance

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towards the world's general opinion—which so many, I am aware, quarrel with, and which even Jamie permitted to be misnamed insolence; but which, in itself, I cannot perceive to be arrogance, nor inconsistent with the deepest humility—being the kind of character and mode of thought to furthest appreciate at once the possibilities open to it and its own actual shortcomings. So that it may well exist, and the life-question be none the more answered one way or the other.

And perhaps in Ada's case, for this small place given to the world's general opinion there was this special ground—people are often aware of what is being tried even whilst succumbing to it—that it was this very outer world who did their best to spoil Ada, a childless man's heiress and a beauty, and therefore desirable spoil for them. Whereas Mr. Hutton, I do believe, meant something almost ideal by his notion

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of a marriage between her and Leyland. And perhaps we would rather not think, Ada would rather not think, how near the world was to success. There was a moment, even after her marriage, when it hung in the balance; when the metamorphosis into a woman of the world seemed more than probable—I am not in the least mind to gainsay it. But there is some life-experience, "as if it ran, troubled of angels, from the porch of Bethesda."

I learned Ada quickly in these days. We had many confidences, this day and the next. She told me things suddenly, as if she had never known what it was before. And she asked me some awkward questions.

"Mr. Doughty is a man of influence and position, and unmarried. Why does he not keep you with him instead of you going out as a governess?"

"Oh, country air was recommended for

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me," said I, with considerable absence—or presence of mind; and then asked Ada whether she really did like that shade of silk now that I had worked it into the slipper.

It was what I learned of Ada that made me so slow to let her know the truth about me. It would have hurt me so to have lost my sister now that I had found her, and I could not be sure yet that I had dug down deep enough to the foundations of the *habit* of considering us in the wrong, which she had been for years acquiring of Mr. Hutton. One cannot well tell when formulas have lost their hold.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE SEA GAT HIM!

"Si tu jamais passes le Ras,
Si tu ne meurs, tu trembleras."
—*French Proverb.*

We hear often enough of prayer ill-advised, misdirected, and in mercy left unanswered. We hear so much less often of the so much stranger circumstance of praise given piously, with full warm hearts, for the thing that, maybe even, is not; that would be utterly poisonous and perilous if it were. But perhaps it is no longer strange when we have it manifested to us that we do not praise God for what is merciful and best for us, or for giving us Himself to put our trust in; but because it has

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happened to us, or has seemed to happen to us, as our wishes, or our judgment, dictate. "I painted a providence of my own . . . . such green and raw thoughts had I of God," wrote old Samuel Rutherford.

We sent our apprehensions almost gaily to the winds, and gave ourselves full liberty to anticipate; we said often how good God had been—meaning quite according to our own specific—and only sighed a little over the period, the week, or perhaps fortnight even, that must pass before Leyland could be heard from directly, and Ada's course be decided for her: whether he was to return to Southwich at once, or she was to go out to him. Our fair-seeming dream was broken in upon harshly and ruinously: God is good.

This morning and another, and there came the saddest time of all—so sad a time that for many a long day Ada lost all that fine negligent grace and half-disdainful calm

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which was so much discussed by people—which people half admired even whilst they resented it—that to this day she has something of the look in her eyes she got into them then. So sad a time that Ada drooped and languished, though she held up her head, and, with dry hollow eyes entreating belief, told us all was well: at any rate all was coming well. So sad a time that even for nine days or so the world held its gibing tongue, and with sympathetic pains for this poor bleeding heart, could have bought off her anguish at the price of all the pleasant scandal it had these previous days been gorging itself with.

Yes, I know it was for the best; although even now to think of it at all particularly is such pain as I almost shrink from bringing on myself. If Leyland's home-coming had been as we had arranged for it to be, I think he would have run the greatest risk of being

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made too much of. Ada was a woman with an immense amount of repressed tenderness in her nature. All her life might have shown it, only the eyes to see so much are so rarely given. It had come out in her attitude towards Mr. Hutton, in her attitude towards us, even, paradox though that may seem; in the taking little Annette into her heart, for her husband's sake first it would have been; in the way she felt towards her husband, in her very holding off from him lest going too trustingly forward she should find something between them which should turn her back with her whole soul embittered. I have seen such repressed tenderness in women who have had no special object to love, break out under eccentric forms, under undisciplined forms, under pathetically miscalculated forms, which were difficult to believe tenderness. It is certainly a quality a little unmanageable.

And so, if Leyland had come back now,

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I doubt whether Ada, with that old cruelly indefinable cause of estrangement effectually exorcised, would not have idolized him; whether she would not have separated him from his failings, instead of bravely taking him with them, as she could, in that beautiful letter; until no element of chastening were left, and he had learned himself to call his fault his misfortune: this is where our love falls away from its pattern, God's love. And I doubt whether Leyland would not—for we are all, or nearly all, capable of these wild, reckless moods—I doubt whether he would not have felt that his life was swept and garnished beyond what he could bear; and so would have gone out and brought in seven devils worse than the first.

But—it is not for me to say so, or, therefore—the Hamburg steamer, *Devonia*, was wrecked on the wide sea, and with it were wrecked our beautiful pleasant hopes.

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I remember it so perfectly!—everything with which I occupied myself that morning; all that occurred. Ada had asked me, in a soft pleading voice, as though she would say, "Be as sparing as you may," to tell Annette as much as she ought to know, indeed must know. Children, and unthoughtful people in general, understand only objective badness, badness of the bogey and black-man order; to which Hill Mathieson's conduct approached much more nearly than Leyland's. So Annette only thought what a pity it was Frank had had anything to do with that horrid, horrid Mr. Mathieson; he wouldn't any more, would he? and had a sort of wonder that she could ever have rather liked him; indeed, putting it in the list of his offences that she had done so. She would never speak to him again; no, that she wouldn't, not if she had to see him a hundred times. And so I left Annette by no means too

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afflicted, and yet knowing the truth—an effect I certainly did nothing to disturb.

Then there had come a letter from Jamie—written to satisfy us on the point of details which he thought would not be sufficiently clear to us otherwise—and I had to get permissible extracts from it for Ada. Then beginning to feel the set of the rumours that were now afloat in the city, I did what I could towards driving them back, though it might be with Mrs. Partington's mop.

"What's all this about, Miss?" growled the old butler to me this morning, with an uncomfortable, puzzled, almost irritable air. "I du hear such things as never was. And I ha' ne'er a word to say. I du hear such things, I can't stand 'em nohow. Belike, Miss—I don't want to meddle, Miss, but I du wish you'd tell me whether there air anything wrong, now."

"Well, Sutton, there is something wrong;

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I don't know that I can tell you more. But we believe that it will be right in a day or two. And if people say things you don't like to hear, you can tell them with perfect truth that they know nothing at all about the matter, and that the advice you give them is, not to talk until they do know."

"Well, I du hear a hape a things," muttered Sutton. "I always did say——"

"Then don't say it again," I interrupted, rather positively; for I could guess the tenor of what was coming. "Because, Sutton," I added, less sharply, "it is the sort of thing which would vex your mistress exceedingly, that you should say or think." The old man looked half in the mind to take offence.

"And I am so sure, Sutton, you have your mistress's wishes near at heart."

"Well, well," he muttered; "some people always air in the wrong."

I had guessed what was coming because

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I had seen too much of the spirit of it since I had been at the Nether House. For instance, old Sutton, a thorough curiosity in his way, had lived in Mr. Hutton's service fifty years, man and boy; Ada's service was only a continuation of it in his eyes—for it was always Ada's service with him and others of the principal servants; and Leyland, in actual authority, was too little head in his own household. I had thought sometimes lately, now that I could say things to Ada, that I would give her a hint of it; so that so much of the remedy as lay with her might be put in operation. For that it was the last thing she would herself desire I was quite sure: it was contrary to all her instincts, tastes, and habits; it would be indeed quite odious to her.

At Southwich we have the day's papers in about two o'clock. Ada had gone to her room after luncheon; I knew the paper had been

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carried to her, and thought I would go and hear whether there was anything special in it. I went slowly up the stairs, revolving in my mind what had just passed between me and Sutton, and thinking I would perhaps mention the subject to Ada at once.

"I painted a providence of my own, and wrote ease for myself, and a peaceable ministry," writes old Rutherford.

As I neared Ada's room I was startled to hear a strange moaning sound. When I entered there was Ada lying all in a heap, as it were, in her chair, her head low on her knees, her hands crushing the newspaper, and she making that constant high-toned moan. I cannot get it out of my ears: to the end of my life, in my bad hours, I shall hear it. It was as if she suffered the intensest physical pain, and yet it was not that; it was as though she was making deepest moan over herself, who was yet quite some other person than

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she herself. I spoke to her, but it might have been that I had never spoken, for any sign of hearing that she made. She let go the paper mechanically when I showed that I would take it, and then put out her hand for it. I kept it until I had read what I saw there in large letters. I do not know how she lived through those moments in which I possessed myself of the intelligence—for in a certain way, she, one part of her thought, was quite aware of me, and of what I was doing. I think her heart must have, as it were, bled in great drops, nearly to the death.

This is what I read there: read with blanched cheeks:

"COLLISION OFF THE EASTERN COAST. SEVERAL LIVES LOST.—Yesterday evening the steamer *Devonia*, for Hamburg, with passengers and cargo of iron, was run into by the iron screw collier *Montague* off Orfordness, and sunk in ten minutes—"

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Then followed a more particular recital, and this paragraph :

"At present it is not possible to state the exact number of lives lost in consequence of this accident, but amongst the drowned it is said is Mr. Frank Leyland, the gentleman whose name has been so freely mentioned the last few days in connection with the affair of the Royal Northern Standard Bank. There is positive evidence that he was on board, and he is not amongst the rescued by the boats of the *Montague.* A gentleman acquainted with his personal appearance, who had observed him earlier in the day, affirms that he was one of two passengers he saw knocked overboard in the first shock of collision."

My peaceable ministry! The sage views I was prepared to advance with regard to Sutton and the rest! Ah, but it was hard,

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hard. The first words Ada said to me—with a quiet conclusive manner—were—

"It is not true, Miss Doughty, of course: you don't suppose it is? It is only a mistake; these newspaper people do get such things into their heads."

She lay there making that moan; I spoke to her more than once. "My dear, my dear," I said, "I cannot, cannot have this," and shook her by the shoulder. And then at last she sat up in her chair; put back her hair from her face with slow lingering hands, her face grey almost as of one that had already died, and said what I have told you,—said it quite steadily and conclusively, so that I had not a word to answer: and I was the one to flinch, not she.

One whole month this was the burden of what we heard from her—we who sorrowed for her so, and watched in wonder and fear for how it was to end. Day by day she read all the evidence in the papers, she

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did not spare herself one word: day by day it became more convincing, yet was she never convinced. Mr. Hulyard, the senior partner in the banking firm, and Rogersons the lawyers, spoke of preparing to close Leyland's affairs, they being his executors. The Insurance Company professed themselves willing, in due time, to pay the five thousand pounds insurance money there was charged on Leyland's life, on the evidence of death. But the wife refused to call herself widow.

I think now that out of very mercy she was let to fall into this little quiet craze; but to us, standing by, it was the most dreadful, pitiable thing. We could not tell whether she more than half believed it herself; for she seemed to take it for granted that we should all be tearful and wretched; and sometimes even, in spite of herself, pressing down her eyelids close with nervous fingers, she would weep a few hot tears. One day, "You are

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crying, Miss Doughty," she said to me. "I think I shall never feel sorry again." Poor little Annette used to be quite frightened at Ada's wan face; she would sob so violently, and then Ada would begin trembling so, that I used to be obliged to hurry the poor child out of the room.

And here a word for myself. I know it is I, I, a great deal in the telling of this story; but then without any express intimation on the part of any one, without any arrangement for it on the part of any one, the responsibility of everything did fall on me. In large places like Southwich it is easy, other causes running with it, to have the widest circle of acquaintances, and scarcely one intimate friend. And the circumstances of Ada's life had been such, and her disposition such, that, less in her case than any, was there likely to be departure from the rule. If I had not been at the Nether

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House, doubtless there would still have been some one woman to have taken her stand by her, and have done what she could. I do not judge so hardly as not to be sure of that. But what I mean is, people were all of them only too content to know that there was no particular call on them to do so. And I admit, too, that very, very kindly feeling may exist, and there still be, and very naturally, this holding back.

It is not a strange thing that I knew scarcely one woman amongst Ada's acquaintances in sufficient accord with her to be *willing* and *able* to come to her now, and draw her wearied head to her, and bring her by degrees to face her grief: it is not strange, for there are few of that kind anywhere. I think Mrs. John Rogerson could have done it: she is one of those women who can talk to you, leaving your grief in the shadow of silence until you can bear to see

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it in the hard distinct outlines of speech, and then can speak out of the compassion of their heart only; which is, I suppose, the highest praise you can give man or woman, for there are so few of us who can bring our compassion to the point of speech; and it is oftenest our sense of expediency, or our desire to do our duty—something or other harsh and consciously lacking in power to soothe—which gets command of our tongues.

But Mrs. John Rogerson was down in Gloucestershire at this time, staying with some Homfrays, relatives of the Southshire Homfrays.

So it was with me Dr. Warth took counsel, and to me he gave such directions as he had to give,—directions which were confessedly more for the satisfaction of other people's expectations than of his own medical conscience.

So it was for me Mr. Hulyard—in whose

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hands the conduct of Leyland's affairs rested —asked when he called, and he saw Ada or not as there was occasion. Poor man, I think each time that he saw her it was worse to him than, say, the return of a bad bill on his hands. I used to be made the victim of a great deal of exceedingly sensible talk on the absurdity and unreasonableness of Ada's immovable incredulity: "Dear me! so utterly subversive of all proper business order. Surely, Miss Doughty, surely there is some way to make her see it." But before Ada herself he was startled and subdued out of all his cruelly correct arguments. And this I will say, that never in Leyland's house did I hear Mr. Hulyard, whose whole creed and rule of life Leyland had gone against; who, indeed, in its injurious effect, had been personally a sufferer by Leyland's conduct—never did I hear him speak one hard word of the poor fellow.

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So it was to me the old butler came with red eyes: "I never meant to say a word agin poor master, Miss; no, that I didn't."

And when Ada said that she owed several calls and would have the carriage out, taking only very short counsel with myself, I prepared to accompany her. Looking at me a moment when I came into the room ready attired for doing so, she said, "Yes, you come with me." And it seemed to take away some of her cloak of self-command. I would have done a great deal to stay her from going; but all along I had seen by her face that nothing I could say would be of any avail.

It was only one call, however, we did make. It was on Mrs. Emberley, at the deanery, and the strangest bit of life at which I ever assisted. The Honourable Mrs. Emberley is a pleasant vivacious woman, very full of resource, and she con-

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trived to hide how much she was shocked; but Gerty Emberley sat with the colour coming and going in her cheeks, and the tears in her great eyes, but quite unable to keep them off Ada. I don't know why, but I could not help thinking of the ghastly waxen effigies they used to parade in solemn funeral procession in olden time: the idea ran in my head that we must be the four effigies of our real selves. Gerty Emberley's sentences and mine were about equally disjointed, but for a few minutes Ada and Mrs. Emberley kept up the commonplaces of a morning call; then Ada broke off in what she was saying, seemed, as it were, to come in full sight at once of her piteous self, and looked frightened and shrinkingly round on us.

"Miss Doughty," she said, with sharp, hasty utterance, "I think I am better at home;" and rose and went out, without even shaking hands. And then Mrs. Em-

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berley had tears in her eyes as well as Gerty Emberley.

We made no more calls, yet Ada still went to church Sunday by Sunday as if nothing had occurred, and still no one in her household wore the garb of mourning.

It was a painfully unnatural state of things, to the kind, conventionally-minded ladies of the neighbourhood: they would have been quite relieved if the young widow could have submitted and worn the austere white border round her thin white face: that she did not, some said was a fighting against Providence. I had a call from one of them, Mrs. Bushe, the wife of the archdeacon. I don't know that she came as a deputation, but she was to do what she could.

A kind old lady, with bright round eyes and old-fashioned attire, rising and stepping almost friskily towards me as I entered; and somehow contriving to place me in the chair

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next hers. Very wise of her I say it was; for the breadth of the table between you necessitates so many more words and so much more involved explanations.

"Yes, yes, I know, I know. You are sisters, and you have come here as governess—very spirited of you, my dear Miss Doughty;" patting my arm and indulging in an infinite number of nods, that an eccentrically-minded ribbon on the top of her bonnet rendered rather trying on one's funny mood. "Very spirited. Now don't be alarmed. Mr. Bushe, your Mr. Bushe, told my husband when they were talking about the poor wife, and it won't go any further; and I esteem you very much for your part in it, if you care to hear it—ve-ry spirited indeed of you." It is certain no other word would have gratified her half as much, or suited her half as well.

Now I, for one, will never take it as any-

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thing against me, in depreciation of me, that people can and do laugh at me. Look at Mrs. Bushe. I cannot write of her without detecting a very good-humoured, thoroughly charitable smile on my own face, and trying to raise one on yours. I am sure, then, she is very liveable with. And I here distinctly affirm my belief in people who can get themselves frankly and merrily laughed at.

"But, don't you think," went on Mrs. Bushe, "it would be so much better if she could be advised to go into mourning? We all think it so melancholy, Miss Doughty; poor young man, to lose his life in that sad way, and not a yard of crape to be worn for him. So very melancholy! You won't mind my coming to mention it to you, now will you?"

"Oh, no, quite the contrary, Mrs. Bushe. I am very glad to have you come. And I think you would find it even more melan-

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choly if you were to be in this sad house, even for one day. Everything and every one cut off from the old life, and equally cut off from any new life. It cannot be good for any of us."

"Ah, ah! So very right." And one doubts whether to call the expression she assumed comic or solemn.

"And didn't Mrs. Leyland," she asked, laying her hand mysteriously on my arm, "call on Mrs. Emberley?"

"Yes, she did call ——"

"Ah, so Dr. Warth told us. Gerty Emberley told him she thought she should have sunk into the ground—sunk into the ground! Well, my dear Miss Doughty, I do think it ought to be managed about the mourning, if it can. If it could be begun with yourselves now? But I am sure you are the best judge. Anything in which I can be of service, don't hesitate to ask of me.

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Send a servant over, and I can be in Southwich in half-an-hour. I shall do no good by seeing Mrs. Leyland to-day, shall I ?—I am sure she's in good hands. I think you are so very right in coming. Mrs. Leyland was so young when she married. By-the-by, they are saying it is Hill Mathieson who has been doing this—this about the bank; and not poor Mr. Leyland." And the good old lady tripped off, well satisfied with herself, but a little sad nevertheless.

Yes, Hill Mathieson was in a fair way to have his reward. I heard from Jamie regularly during this period; he had been down once—without seeing Ada—and he kept me informed in the progress of affairs. It was coming out how little share Frank Leyland had had in the concoction and promulgation of the fraudulent report; that he had been, as I have said, not quite so clear as behoved an honourable man, but still very much a tool in

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the hands of unscrupulous men more needy than they dare own. The course Druce had taken was become easier to understand than Leyland had found it, for Druce had spoken out. Hill Mathieson, there was no doubt, had guided him into that course as dexterously as he had guided Leyland to his ruin; and that ruin people saw now, too, had been by no means a chance result of Mathieson's plans.

It had not been difficult to make Druce believe Leyland the safer associate for him when partial discovery seemed upon them, just in proportion as his position was more substantial than Mathieson's, and worth more fighting and bargaining for, and buying off. Also, if it could be made worth his while, and did not tend to imperil his own case, he would be content to do something towards shielding Mathieson; Leyland would probably have had his quietus for ever, so far

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as speculation went; nothing further for Druce with him. But there might be many a queer game yet, in which he and Mathieson should stand in the relation of partners. But now Leyland was dead, and this course had lost its strongest recommendation: it did not please people to hear his name blackened. Besides, with those persons who had his affairs in hand, there was evidently no intention to keep things back; they seemed, indeed, to court inquiry, and Druce made a shrewd guess that it might be wisest in him to anticipate inquiry. Else a second time facts might be made, in some mysterious way, to look favourably for Mathieson; but with him, Druce, for the scapegoat. Also, we may well believe, some gentler and better feelings went towards influencing him—some feeling of remorse for the untoward fate of a man who had, at least, intended him no harm. We may believe it, because they are

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not always wisest who look first and most to the worse side, of human nature.

So Druce had spoken out, a revulsion of feeling had set in; Leyland was likely to be spoken of as a victim to simple imprudence, and Mathieson was likely to have meted out to him full measure and running over. I heard it from Jamie; I saw it in the papers; I came into personal contact with it in Mrs. Bushe and others; I saw it in Mathieson himself, whom I met one day in the city: there was about him a worried, driven look that had his face in a harder grip than his former constant complaisant smile could release it from. For a brief space it seemed to me some consolation; then it struck me as sadder than all. For any retribution that lies in the power of us men and women can only be partial and unsatisfactory; our consciences refuse to rest on it; our love, or tenderness, or pity, are not met, are even turned back by it.

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We, in this world, seem to make jargon of such noble things even as justice, mercy, and truth. Poor Leyland lying at the bottom of the sea, food for fishes, and people inclined to make a martyr of him! I, for one, would have been better pleased to have heard it said, "Ah, poor fellow, he went wrong, off the safe path, as all of us at some time or other are doing: and his sin has found him out sooner than yours and mine and others' commonly have done. They say, though, he knew it before he died." This is what my dear, in the grief-darkened chamber of her heart, was slowly spelling out. We saw it not. I do not say we were faithless; but our eyes were dim with pity, and we were standing by helpless—which is so hard for us fettered souls full to suffering, with crude incoherent working power.

A second time—I think just a month after the wreck of the *Devonia*—we had laid

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out the black garments in Ada's dressing-room, thinking that she might, perhaps, mechanically submit to have them put on; a second time we failed, but before so quiet and unspoken a resistance, that we could not tell whether the sense of her widowhood was at all with her, whether her mind was not still numb. We were as much in the dark as the doctor is sometimes over the patient under the death-like spell of paralysis, whom, with what under general circumstances would be dreadful torture, he strives to rouse into life. He believes him without sensibility, but it may be—I don't think science has any positive test—it may be, that it is only that the tongue is speechless, the muscles incapable of obedience.

But in the evening Ada called me to her: she had been more than usually mute all day; she took my hand and put it against her cheek—she had such little piteous gestures now:—

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"Let it be as it is only until after to-morrow, and I will do as you wish. We shall have been married a year to-morrow—I can't to-morrow."

"Yes, my dear; yes," I said, smoothing gently the soft hair. "You shall do only as you like." Poor little widow, what a mournful little figure she would make! I began to wish almost that she had not yielded.

"No, you are right, Miss Doughty. I have been asking to be taught to feel that what God permits must be for the best. If I am to be alone in the world"—her voice went down into a most tremulous whisper—"I am to be alone." We can never too well understand that the nearer we get to what is right—or righteous, I like the full strong word—the farther we get from what is morbid: it is a law which stands workaday wear, and is yet equal to the greatest occasion.

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Who can tell the depth and darkness of the abyss up the steep sides of which my poor sister had to climb ere she came again where the play of human interests, in which lie the great good gift of healing, could reach her?

To-day her eyes looked less wearily when you spoke, and of herself she asked after this matter and that. And in the evening she even went down to a workman's house near, where she had been told two of the children lay ill. She found the mother ill too; she remained some time—it had always been easy for her to obtain the confidence of the poor, you know. When she returned, she not only ordered the housekeeper to send in broth and wine, and such things, with which it is so easy for rich people to satisfy their consciences with regard to the poor, but she sat some time with me devising plans for their further benefit. And

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I noticed a new, patient, peaceful look in my darling's wonderful grey eyes. She had not forgotten her grief, she had not stifled it; she bore it about her more plainly than ever; but she no longer leaned on it, so to speak: seeing her you knew what kind of woman she would always henceforth be—that was all.

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CHAPTER X.

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.

"And next the darky night is the glad morrow,
And also joy is next the fine of sorrow."—CHAUCER.

TO-DAY they would have been married a year. How the joy-bells of a year ago would ring in her heart to-day: joy that we repent of, that seems a falsehood to us, is a very bitter thing. What long shadows the day would cast before it!

About ten—Ada was up, but had not left her room—word was brought me that a gentleman desired to speak with me immediately, and I went down into the dining-room to find Jamie there.

"Oh, Jamie!" I said, and sat down in the first chair.

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For Jamie looked very much as he did one day when he came from his laboratory to my room and said—his face as white as a sheet,—"Jane." "Well?" "Jane, I was using so-and-so with so-and-so—" (if I knew how to spell the words he actually used, you probably would not know any more than I did what they meant); "and I just did thus-and-thus. And the result is that there is pretty nearly everything in the place smashed." "Oh, Jamie!" I cried. "And how bad you look, you silly boy; do let me get you some brandy. Everything broken; what a pity!" "Why, Jane," said he, with a queer faint sort of smile, "how grieved you seem. Don't you know what it means? Only that I have made out at last the secret of so-and so." It was the discovery of what first made Jamie's name famous!

Well, I was quite as dull now. "Oh,

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Jamie!" I said, and sat down, as I told you, in the first chair.

"Yes, Jane," said he, and nothing more. Which was very tiresome of him: only I suppose he would have done better if he could.

"Jamie, if it is anything about George, I cannot bear it," said I, sharply, speaking under the sudden sway of an uncontrollable fear and pain; for I had got into that way that it seemed only what I must look for, to have my whole world turned upside down.

And now Jamie's sentences came tumbling out as if each one were a douche to keep me from fainting.

"George?—no, no; it isn't George. Do be a good sensible girl, Jane. George drove with me to the station, and I never saw him better."

"Oh, it isn't George." And I certainly did not conduct myself in the most sensible

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manner. "Don't laugh at me too much, Jamie," I said, a little piteously.

"Laugh!—no, child," said Jamie, with a face of kind anxiety for me. "I don't wonder at your expecting only bad news. What do you think, Jane?—Leyland is not dead."

"Leyland not dead, Jamie! Can you mean it?"

"Leyland is not dead. He and two others clung to a piece of wreck, and then one of the steamer's boats floating past them, they contrived to get on that, and at daylight they were taken off by a Swedish barque. Yesterday I had a letter from him; and his London man of business had a telegram; but that ought to have come to hand days ago. And this morning Wright—that is his London man of business, you know—had a letter as well, which had also been delayed."

"Poor Ada!" And I sitting there, and

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Jamie standing there, looked away from each other in a heavy silence, with no words quick enough for our feelings.

"But where has he been all this while? Why did he not write, come, or something? Couldn't he think of his poor wife?" I asked, flaming up suddenly, finding it a relief, almost a necessity to get up some counter-emotion.

Jamie laughed outright. He may say what he likes, I think his laugh was a safety-valve, too.

For he answered seriously enough, "Why, I told you, you know, that the telegram to his solicitor ought to have turned up days ago. And the letter as well, only it was dated from some outlandish Swedish port, and has been half round the world, I verily believe. He was eleven days on board the barque. He did try to get put on shore at some nearer port, but there was no one on

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board who could speak English, and the master — a gruff, surly fellow — evidently didn't mean to understand any such request. I do think, Jane, he has been very anxious for his wife: I judge by his letter to me."

"Has he received Ada's letter then? He wouldn't think of writing to you unless he had seen her letter."

"He made his way down by Hamburg, it appears, after all; and picked it up there. He saw all the English papers there, too; and they determined him to come on to England at once. He may be in London now,"

"Now he won't be so unwise, surely, as to come down here without any notice," said I, in some alarm. "He is *so* heedless."

"No, no; he won't do that either. Besides, even if that were in his mind, he's safe to call on his London people first, and I left a note with them for him not to come

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on further until he had seen me. I took that much upon me. But he is sufficiently anxious about his wife; I believe he quite understands what a dreadful time it must have been for her. He admits that it did not occur to him in the first moment. I dare say they were barely out of sight of land when they were picked up. But then he tumbled into a hammock and never thought a thought for a day or so, I'll be bound. He says he was nearly wild over it afterwards. At the time he writes the letter to me—which is some days after he had sent off the telegram and letter to his solicitor—he, you know, imagines us in some measure set right upon the subject of his escape, although he can't quite understand how it is not into the newspapers he has seen. Oh, I think you will find Leyland has learned a lesson he'll not quickly forget."

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"I have very little pity to spare for him, Jamie."

"No, and you won't when he comes home, will you? It is not at all certain that you will even speak to him I should think. You don't ought to." And Jamie's eyebrows went nearly to the top of his forehead.

"You did not come here to talk nonsense, Jamie."

"No, indeed, I did not. There is a very serious bit of work before one of us. Ada will have to be told very carefully,—there has been all the weight of this terrible month on her. I thought at first of Dr. Warth. But, Jeanie"—feeling his way with me as he spoke—"only be your own brave, steady self, and no one can break this to Ada so well as you."

Of course, in very fact, I knew at once it would be me who would do it; but all the same I think I had quite the right to look

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and act in the most troubled manner, and rise with all the nervous reluctance possible. "If it must be me"—I should have so liked to have gone into hysterics or talked great nonsense for a few minutes first; just as a preparation of the nerves, you know. But Jamie looked so beseechingly and said again so anxiously, "Dear, good sister, be only your own kind, brave self," that I considerately forbore from trying either nostrum.

I felt anything but brave, however, when I found myself in Ada's room; I went about in a distraught sort of way, taking up this article and that without any object in what I did. The first word costs all the rest. Said Ada, from where she stood by the fire: "Miss Doughty, has any one heard this morning how that poor woman is, do you know?"

I had heard, from the housekeeper; and

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what I had heard I had not been at all pleased to hear. But I gave Ada no answer; instead I knocked down a glass jug and picked up the fragments carefully.

"Jane," said I to myself, very seriously, "do be a little less like a child;" which had a very good effect on me.

I went up to Ada. "My dear, if—if some great good news—some—" She twisted her hands out of mine, and held mine so fast in hers that it hurt me.

"If Mr. Leyland, my dear, were not dead, if he were coming home soon—" Where next my speech was going to lead me I do not know; I never needed to know. She let go my hands and sat down, shading her eyes with her hands as if there was too much light.

"Ah," she said, in a strange, shaken, far-away voice, "I always knew it was so. I have said it was a mistake, you

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remember. I knew he would come back to me."

And she began walking up and down the room, between sobbing and sighing, wringing her hands bitterly. I did not know what to do at first, but at length with persuasive words and a little gentle force I got her back into the chair. She laid her head on the table, sobbed just as a child might, "oh—oh—oh," quieted like a child, and fell asleep as she sat. I slipped a pillow under her head, threw a cloak over her, and when a few minutes had passed so, went down to Jamie.

He had given me a long circumstantial account of Leyland's adventures, and had been gone some time to call on Mr. Hulyard, before Ada awoke. I had looked in on her several times to find her still in the same deep restful sleep: now she was leaning back in the chair with open eyes, but almost the same hush about her. I don't know, but I

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think it was that her joy seemed a very real, yet so very fragile a thing to her! it had to be held to her so tenderly.

She drew me down to her and kissed me, and sat silent a little while; and when I sat down by her she slipped one hand into mine, with the other putting back her hair from her face with a curious continuous soothing action. It was then she said to me all she did say for many a long day of what had happened, speaking in a soft murmurous voice, as with the cunning quiet of one lying happily dreaming where any stir would bring in the tread of many feet. So silent and still had been her grief, that you might not have thought how wasting it had nevertheless been, until you caught the significance of this present attempt at quiescence; it was almost a necessity to her, and to me very pathetic and eloquent.

She said, "I have had a long bad dream,

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and I am so happy now to wake and find it is not true."

"Yes, my dear," I said, "and you cannot think how happy I am for you."

"It is like all bad dreams; they seem to take hours, the whole night, when really it is only a minute or so. This month, why it has seemed as though it were all my life—always."

"Do you know," she went on, suddenly turning to me with a strange penetrative brightness in her eyes, so that it seemed as if they must become aware of all that I had thought and done in this—"Do you know, Miss Doughty, I think I had not my husband's love till quite before this?—he had once cared for some one else. I don't know whether it made it easier or harder. But," and her low voice grew vehement in her eagerness of assertion, "I loved Frank from the first: I did. I let him engage him-

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self to me because I was bid, Miss Doughty; but I loved him. I ought not to have let him do so, as things were: I know it," and now she spoke again in the tremulous voice of confession. "I knew it at the time; only there was Mr. Hutton—I could give him such pleasure. And I did not see then that it would hurt any one but myself. But if I have suffered for it, so has Frank. I never thought of it in that way. Nothing can make it right for a woman to marry a man who does not love her, I am sure of that now; she does him the greatest wrong as well as herself. It is not the same thing at all when a man marries a woman who does not care for him; not one half so dangerous. But," said she, as to herself, "I loved Frank—always, always."

She asked me nothing; so much as she learned at this time, she learned in casual glimpses from what I said unasked. I think,

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for herself, she wanted nothing but the great consoling fact. But one cannot be in the seventh heaven for long without incurring penalties; and details form gradual steps for an easy descent. So I made apparently chance words tell her her husband's tale, whenever I found the opportunity. There is no stronger evidence, to my thinking, of our essential infirmity than the degree in which we are compelled to be abstinent in joy.

As soon as Jamie returned, Ada sent me down to ask him to join us at luncheon, using many kind, grateful words. And when brother and sister stood for the first time hand in hand—she looking the thanks she could not speak, and he something she could not have understood if her thoughts had been free enough to stay on it—I smiled, and wondered a little curiously what they would make of each other when they knew more

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of one another. I was fain to be somewhat anxious; I did not want them to begin wrong. Ada was so subdued, I was half afraid he, with his old uncertainty about her, might not think her joyful enough: but then I am so often afraid for people, and a little given to bring out my farthing rushlight to show the noon sun.

("Ah," says Jamie, looking over my shoulder, "as usual, saying harder things of yourself than you will find any one to say of you, you painstaking, conscientious woman."

"And more things laudatory, too, Jamie," I answer. "Speak all the truth if you speak any. Who says such fine things of me ever as I say sometimes of myself?"

"Well," Jamie replies, very composedly, "I do not think I object. Oh, I am free to admit it.")

However, my fears in this special direction

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did not last through the meal; the carefully indifferent conversation took a line too near that which might not yet be spoken of. Ada,. with suddenly distressed eyes and trembling lips, half turned to me as though I were the appointed guardian of her peace, and fell back on silence as abruptly as when she had walked out of Mrs. Emberley's drawing-room. Jamie, too, with a man's horror of a scene, looked desperately to me. I don't respond to these things quickly; I could without any appreciable difficulty go on talking in that matter-of-fact manner which makes Jamie call me his dear, homely, sober sister; the real state of things being, as he himself once said, that the ground-swell does not reach me until other people have ceased to think of the tempest that shook them.

When Jamie was about to go, Ada said, looking affectionately at me:

"If I had been you, Mr. Doughty, I

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would never have spared your sister to any one."

"You would not?" he replied, giving me a pleasant glance, expressive of much. "Well, perhaps, it is the same with regard to Jane as it is with regard to other things that we prize none the less because of it—we just keep them in abeyance, because we are so sure of our claim on them."

"I have never been able to agree with that," said Ada, with more warmth than she generally allowed herself. "If your meaning is what I suppose it to be, it is the claim of relationship that is to be so insisted on. Now I would always give so much higher place to such a claim as, for instance, your sister has given me on her, by her constant kind thoughtfulness for me, which it is impossible I can ever forget." Ada had never said many words of thanks to me directly. "See," said Ada, smiling, "Miss

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Doughty is thinking that is one way of putting it."

"Oh, but you have put it well," answered Jamie.

"And, perhaps, Mr. Doughty, you are not so good a judge as I am, whose family circumstances have been so different to yours."

"I said you had put it well; but, Mrs. Leyland, you must not, therefore, assume that I agree with you. 'Better kinde friend than friende kinde'—it makes an admirable epigram; yet I distrust epigrams, and this one in particular. It is well every way, I think, that our hearts, like our riches, our power, have a lien, as it were, of duty on them. The fact is, there is a wonderfully useful discipline in relationship; you will never find anything to make up for the absence of it."

We each, in our different ways, found it very applicable. Jamie spoke very gravely,

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and with a strong belief in what he was saying. It was put too plainly in one way to sound like a hint of something beyond; but it could not be without a degree of apprehension that I watched for the effect on Ada.

She coloured, and half averted her face. After a pause she said: "I can understand that. You have almost made a convert of me." But Ada, I saw, was applying it to nearer things than we were.

There was a minute of silence, and then, "Well, good-morning again, ladies," said Jamie, thinking we had had quite enough of this very grave talk. "I suspect, Mrs. Leyland, we shall not have the opportunity to quarrel as to which of us is to have the most of Jane; for if you had been with me this morning, you would have thought some one was very much bent on spiriting her away from either of us—and that very soon too.

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"Your sister is a very quiet person about herself," said Ada, entering fully into his humour in her own nice fashion, "but I have managed to make out the existence of Mr. Hepplestone."

"A very quiet person about myself, am I?" I said, by way of retort on both of them; looking at Ada and putting my sisterhood into my eyes, I think. "You know then that I have something to say, if I choose, worth the hearing?" Not expecting any such rash words from sober sensible me, Jamie's face was as though I had flashed the secretest letter before the eyes of the last person in the world who ought to see it. Quite revenge enough for his banter, Jamie's face was.

But I went no farther, not indeed intending to go farther at this moment; refusing to myself to make up my mind to go on. "Ah, will you, Ada, ever take me by the

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hand and call me sister?" was the painfully solicitous question my heart asked of her always; I cannot tell you how I beset her with that question. But to my tongue it had never risen yet; except lightly, in such form as now.

Then Jamie left. And we went quite back, Ada and I, from any such question again.

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CHAPTER XI.

LOST AND WON.

> "For life with all it yields of joy and woe,
> And hope and fear,—believe the aged friend—
> Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love."
> —*A Death in the Desert.*—ROBERT BROWNING.

ADA was like a girl expecting her lover on these two days before Leyland came home. She went about with absent eyes, a half-smile on her face. I think it was to her, as if in coming home in this wise he was coming to take up for the first time the gift of her fresh young heart, which had lain so long within his reach if his idle eyes had cared to make the discovery.

There were still moments in which she was apprehensive; in which she checked herself, lest her joy should a second time

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betray her. Two or three times she took my hands in hers, and with tearful eyes, said, "Oh, Miss Doughty—if—if—Oh, don't let me be such a coward, dear Miss Doughty—don't."

"There, there," said I, patting her cheek and kissing her; "don't come to a strong-minded woman like me with such nonsense."

And Ada would be obliged to laugh, and would go away with the colour in her face and the smile in her eyes again. I was quite thankful when she was going about from one room to another; for her restlessness was such when she was seated, that an hour of it was enough to disturb one's wits.

The morning of the second day came a note from her husband; very short, only this:—

"DEAREST WIFE,—I shall be home by the 2.20 train to-morrow. I leave all till then;

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what I have to say cannot be written"—and the signature.

She held the letter in her hand some long time. I knew that every now and then she looked towards me with wistful eyes; but I did not want to take any notice, so I pretended to be absorbed in the drawing I was completing. By-and-by, she, in passing, laid the letter on the table before me, and went quietly out. And when she returned I noticed she was dressed with especial care.

Leyland came a little, half-an-hour or so, earlier than he had led us to expect,—by the other line. And it was just as well. For Ada's restlessness grew and grew until she seemed almost bewildered. We were sitting in her room; I by the window, she by the fire, with unquiet hands and foot beating uneasily on the carpet, and then a stillness

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if possible yet more impatient; giving me glances now and then, half eager, half deprecatory, conscious she was affording me a little amusement.

But, perhaps, I was myself nearly as agitated when, from my seat in the window I caught a glimpse of a cab whirling away from the entrance-door, of which I had only a partial view. But though I could not see who the arrival was, I was not long in guessing. With a half exclamation I turned to Ada—she was standing looking towards the door with keen flushed face and parted lips: I believe I might have executed a *pas seul* on the table, any extraordinary thing I chose, and she would have been none the more aware of my presence. There were quick accustomed steps—each one of them an exquisitely painful pleasure—upon the stairs, along the corridor, and Leyland stood in the room. Ada turned deathly

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white, and sat down in the chair with her face hidden.

Leyland stood in the room, looking as handsome, prosperous, gentlemanly, off-hand as ever—until you came to look closer; when you detected even in his very attitudes, the trick of his mouth and hands, a settled apprehension, an appearance of always wanting to shirk the next moment. It was not a pleasant revelation. Then his wife acted as I have said, and sat there still and silent, with her face bowed on her hands. And the lines deepened in his face, until it quite seemed, as it were, to fall away from its handsome setting, and to become a moody, bitter, ill-boding, care-worn, old man's face. He looked at his wife, and when he seemed to understand her feeling, it was with a wild rage in his eyes; he quite shook with passion of some kind—it was not easy to say what.

"Yes, Ada, you can't call me worse than

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I am: thief, villain, coward, I am all that." He did not speak in a loud forced tone, but out of a hard long-accepted conviction ten thousand times more to be dreaded. It was what her attitude said to him; yes, and he knew now that he had been quite prepared for this.

It was said the other day: "It is a terrible thing to run the risk of changing humility into humiliation. Humiliation is one of the proudest conditions in the world."

"Do I not know how ill I have done? My God, yes," he said, speaking fast and violently now, putting his hands out with a strangely miserable action. "I declare to you it is quite a relief to call myself flatly what I am, a blackguard. I would thank any one to——" There he stopped, grew stiff and stern, drew up his head in a curious way, and saying in an altered voice, "I cannot be worse than I am," half turned to go.

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There are moments so fraught with results that a whole lifetime is not longer nor more fertile. Leyland quieted in that curious way; spoke in that curious voice; half turned to go. It was all shown to my mind in an instant; what it was—the thought such as of the slow river lying invisible beneath the terraced garden: but quick as thought, she rose—my darling rose, stretching out her hands with so sweet a flash and gesture of loving rebuke.

"Oh dear husband, don't, don't!" and her arms were about his neck, and she was kissing him. "Oh, it hurts me," she said, as if it had been herself of whom he had spoken so ill, whom he had denounced.

"Why do you speak so?" she sobbed out; "oh, don't any more."

It came upon him in a moment; it was his wife pleading passionately with him against himself!—it broke him down as

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never before had I seen a man broken down: such depth of self-reproach—yes, and in that one moment come to be of so much truer account—had he never before reached. He was sobbing now, as any woman might; and still with it all he drew her to him as though he would never, never let her go. I slipped softly out of the room, and went to where the painted window is at the head of the great staircase, and stood looking about me, smiling through tears that had no more bitterness. For I think he never again will.

The next two days I go about the house as one in a daze, quite astray in everything, my occupation gone; teaching Annette had never been my real occupation at the Nether House, but even that is gone, for Annette learns no lessons in these days. So I go mooning about the house and the garden, whose crimson and yellow is sadly fading,

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and down to the water steps. Heigho! I don't think I should much mind if George Hepplestone were to come and spirit me away for good and all, as he threatened to do. I have used George badly—it is little I have said about him all this while; but then that would be our story, and it is not our story I am telling here. But I have used him badly. The quarter of a year is up six weeks ago, and he has carefully refrained from pressing his disappointment on me so long as he could think I had sufficient else to bear. But his letter this morning is unmistakable—and I am sure those two happy people within don't want me now: if I don't get away from here soon I shall feel as if I had used up my vocation!

There is but one thing more I have to do here, and that I doubt whether I ever shall do. I remember how Ada argued against Jamie for the claims of friends against those

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of relatives; I think sometimes I will be content with the name of friend; but still my heart asks, and will not be quieted, for the dearer name of sister. And, even because of it, I dare not challenge the result; for there will be no going back. I don't wonder so many of Portia's lovers went away without choosing. Yes, I am sick at heart for it. I think I should like to creep away from every one to dear old George and order him to pet and spoil me out of my foolish morbid fancies.

Don't condemn me too much, my reader, that so I am come to think and feel two days after my dear sister's so much greater and more real heart-sickness is healed: the fact is, I have been bearing my little world on my shoulders so long a time, that the return to the natural position brings an ache with it in the first moment.

But next morning the case alters. For

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next morning, as I am going down to breakfast, I meet Ada's maid, flustered into rather more than her usual affected primness.

"Oh, Miss, I was just a lookink for you. I wish, Miss, you'd be so good as to go and speak to my mistress, Miss. I am sure she's very far from being well." I gave the girl a quick scrutinizing glance.

"You know, Miss," said she, hesitatingly, "that poor woman's very bad with the black fever?" She saw by my face that my thought ran with hers, so she went on more volubly: "I'm sure my mistress's hands is as hot as fire itself."

The girl, in spite of her prim, affected ways, was neither a simpleton nor a coward. So "I will go to your mistress, Dyer," I said; "but don't go and talk below. It will only alarm the other servants; and, perhaps, without any cause. Time enough if it be as you fear."

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"Yes, Miss. For people are *so very* foolish, Miss," answered the girl, mincing her words with a diverting air of superiority to "people."

"Good-morning, Miss Doughty," said Ada, as I put back the curtains. "I suppose Dyer told you I wasn't very well. Indeed I think I am on your hands again for some time. Oh, dear, I think my head will split. What a trouble I am to you," said she, opening her eyes which she had closed with the pain, and trying to smile to make me think she was in no alarm for herself.

"We will have Dr. Warth up immediately," said I, gravely, but not dolefully—somehow I could not be in any great alarm for her. "You don't need to be told to remain in bed, for it's no question of getting up I see," and I laughed with a better grace than she had. I had her hot parched hands in mine, and noting her quick breath and

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flushed cheeks, I had no doubt what Dr. Warth's judgment would be, and I did not try to make it out otherwise.

"You think I have caught this fever?" said Ada, a little nervously. "I didn't tell Frank so, poor fellow. I thought—people do often get over fevers, Miss Doughty?"

"Get over fevers! I should think they do, my dear!" said I, stoutly. "And see what a nurse you will have!" And I drew myself up, as if I were a legion in myself. And although you may, or may not find it so in this book, my reader, I am sometimes a most convincing person.

Well, it was the fever; and I had them all on my hands again, and my spirits rose at once—did I not give you liberty long ago to laugh at me if it pleased you? And you quite know what I mean.

There were many things to be thought of—one of the first to get Annette sent out

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of the way. The cook's sister, herself an old servant of the Huttons, lived at Lydemouth, the fashionable Southshire sea-port; Annette and Page were sent to her. But there were other things that could not be managed so easily; and though I had no lack of kind friends to come to my help in this, my second usurpation of authority, yet almost everything came finally on me. For instance, Mrs. Bushe, than whom no one could be kinder, engaged for me a Chudleigh Wick person as nurse. However, the third night I caught her napping when Ada should have had her medicine, and from that time I took the night-nursing on myself.

Ada seemed to like the new arrangement; once or twice she spoke of the trouble I was giving myself, begging me not to overtax my strength so: still it pleased her to have me by her in the intervals of her delirium, and sick persons don't expect to be taken at their word.

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It was something, too, to have Leyland on one's hands. It was, indeed, very terrible for him. He had come back to Southwich sufficiently disgusted with himself: insomuch that I think he would have given almost all that he had to be able to recall the last three months. But one thing I am sure he would not have given—the new confidence between him and his wife. I think, as often as he had tokens of it he felt himself a better and a stronger man: and he was better and stronger, for it made him feel also that he might not have done this evil thing, and yet have been by many degrees more sinning. This, I take it, is what we all need to feel, and when we have come to accept it, our feet are fairly on the road to better things. But why his wife's devotion should particularly foster these healthy feelings, was partly in that it provided a wholesome responsibility. Surely not the least potent

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amongst God's chosen instruments stand these earthly loves of ours.

Then Leyland, poor fellow, with his new resolves warm about his heart, saw this great good going from him; and in the way, too, an ingenious and tortured imagination could well believe, of deserved retribution. It was, indeed, very terrible for him; although, in truth, Ada was never in any sensible danger; of course one was anxious, but throughout no specially dangerous symptoms manifested themselves. But, to Leyland, it very naturally seemed otherwise; he could not accept Dr. Warth's assurances, let them be ever so confidently given: I was sometimes stony-hearted enough to smile when the poor fellow's overwhelming anxiety took the form of pressing on me a superabundance of creature comforts, lest I, too, should break down, and his wife be at the mercy of untrustworthy hands. The regimen I had to

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submit to to obtain any respite! Would not you have laughed to have seen me taking my drives in state, as prescribed by Doctor Frank Leyland!

Which is not at all saying but that I had a quite sufficient desire to escape the fever for myself. Anything in my power to do towards escaping it, provided it did not clash with my power to be of the first service to Ada, I was willing and even anxious to do: it would have been inexcusable in me otherwise. However it did not avail me. Ada had got as far as the couch in her dressing-room for some hours in each day, when I one morning woke to the consciousness of being myself very ill. I had been getting doubtful about myself, and Dr. Warth ominously inquisitive for the last day or two: this morning I was in no doubt whatever. With some difficulty I dressed; Dr. Warth was to come at eleven; I said nothing

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to those in the house, intending to wait until I had seen him. I went half-way downstairs and then turned and crept back to my own room, and laid myself half on the bed in the hope of a little recovering myself.

I remember feeling horribly sick and giddy, and growing more and more dense and helpless, until to "think a thought" would have been utter impossibility; and as if that were not enough, a hundred small feet went to work to stamp the cruel stupidity down deeper and deeper into my brain. And I had the sensation of slowly slipping from the bed to the floor, while the small feet danced on more diligently than ever; and sometimes the owners of them—only the horrible thing was that they were nothing—came to peer quite closely into my face to see if they were doing their work well; and that frightened me so, that I laughed, and to hear myself

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laugh frightened me still more. I did not quite at first remember this, but when I had been told of things that I did and said, it gradually came back to me. Nothing more do I know of what were many days; until one day that I awoke to an exquisite sense of repose, a "masterly inaction" extending even to the will.

Oh, it was delicious to lie there and feel one's self wrapped in utter idleness; to be just conscious of one's limbs, and not to be so much as capable of willing them to exert themselves: the opiate of weakness acts just as do other opiates; the process of throwing it and them off is not the most agreeable, but the first effects are unequalled. It is the only sensation to which I cannot apply Kant's wonderful definition of pleasure, as "a feeling of the furtherance of life, as pain is a sense of its hindrance." And yet I think I can, after all.

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I lay awhile with my eyes still closed, feeling by no means called upon to open them; there was the movement of a person about the room, the door was opened and shut softly, and after a minute opened and shut again, and there was a hushed word, and some one had come gently to the bedside. Upon which I revolved indolently in my thoughts whether it would not be a becoming act of civility to turn my eyes that way. So I sent forth the edict, and moving lazily on their hinges, they made out Ada seated on the side of the bed, leaning forward in anxious suspense. On the instant her little hand closed round mine and we were smiling into each other's eyes. Indeed it won't bear talking about much; and so we found it then.

She sat so a happy interval, then she stooped and kissed me, and I heard a whisper of "dear sister." You know there are

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moments when the heavens seem to open about your life, and God looks down and confirms it.

Ada motioned to the other person present, and forthwith, in a state of modest doubt whether I was myself at all, I saw loom large in the foreground with the emblem of her calling, a medicine-glass in her hand, a personable woman, brisk, ruddy-faced, her lips pursed up to an extent that was unspoken wit. Ada took the mixture from her, but with such unsteady hands, that before she at all knew she was put quietly aside, and I was submissively receiving the potent draught from nurse's own hands. This nurse was certainly one well able to maintain her supremacy.

"There, there, now we'll do," said she, smiling benevolently on me, her patient: a contrast she, in her homely stuff gown, snow-white handkerchief folded across her chest,

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and cap with high frills, to my slight, delicately-featured sister smiling over her shoulder, still a little bewildered by the quickness of her removal from the place of authority. "And you get now a nice sleep, you don't know how really nice you'll fare. Ah, and you, ma'am," turning briskly round and making, to my great enjoyment, an attack on Ada herself; "if you'll go and get a little nap you'll be all the comfortabler. Poor cretturs, both on ye."

Ada laughed a little, and, ah, with such a light heart I at once knew, looked at me with serious sweet eyes: "By-and-by again, Jeanie," she said, stooping to kiss me again before she left. I liked my name so as she spoke it: you do not know how much it meant. You know the kind of voice in which she would speak it, the young, plaintively clear, voice; the sort of voice that hangs rhythmical in the air about one

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after the speaker has ceased. I lay restfully speculating on it and her, long after she had gone from the room.

If you wanted me to show Ada to you in a few words I don't know how better I could do it than by telling you that her predominating quality is *tone:* not using the word in its lighter French sense, but almost technically; nor confining it to her manners and outward appearance; to her sweet serious face, to her young clear voice, her fine leisurely movements, her gentle gravity, her delicate humour : but extending it to the thoughts of her heart and the acts which are her life,—to her so wholly that it almost supplies that description of her I have said once I could not give.

In the evening Ada came to me again, seating herself on the bed as before. "Were you at all aware," said she, a little wickedly, "that you had another visitor this morning

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besides me? You did not know, did you, that some one came and stood in the doorway a minute or more, and had a good look at you after I went?—some one who was obliged to leave by the very next train for London?"

She would not give me time to make any trouble of it that I had not seen him. "But I really think,"—she went on,—"you are looking so nicely after this wonderful sleep that nurse prescribed for you—I do think Frank might come up for a few minutes, and Jamie—" with the slightest gesture of the eyes, so to speak, the slightest inflection of the voice. I had never dreamed so sweet a thing as this for the new life of which I had spoken to Mrs. Bushe. "And Jamie, too. What do you say to my having had him for my guest this week?" She could have been moved over it; only she said it all with a tender lightness for my sake. "If they

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come you will be good, will you not? Nurse, Miss Doughty promises to be good."

"Yes, ma'am; I hear, ma'am. But only five minutes; not a minute longer, mind, ma'am," said nurse, authoritatively. "I'll go myself and tell the gentlemen—then I shall know."

Ada was agitated, if only that she held my hand so tightly in hers and would not look their way when they came in. But Leyland was outwardly most affected; that is to say, he knew least what to say or do. Well, all the past met with this meeting by my bedside. And he of all of us, I suppose, had most that he was bound to say because of that past.

This was the rather outré way in which he greeted me: "And now pray, Miss Jane Doughty—if I may be excused the question—may we at last understand you to have reached your final development? Or are we

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to have something—in the Fenian line, say, next?"

"No; I am only in my own proper person now." We all laughed—not because of the wit of it, but because we could not do otherwise. And he rattled on afresh:

"Yes, I call you a dreadful imposture, and nothing short of it. Since the days of that terrible young woman the 'Female Jesuit,' I have heard nothing to equal you. So sober and demure—the young person engaged in tuition all over. But I—I say—I say—you saved my wife's life; Dr. Warth says you did." And he wrung my hand and went abruptly out of the room.

This was quite unexpected. Both Jamie and I thought of Ada. But Ada does so rarely show emotion, and Jamie in his composed, helpful way, said—so kindly:

"We can't spare you long here, Jeanie. You can't think what a necessary person

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you are: we none of us can understand it. Mrs. Carlin and George will make a match of it, I promise you, if you don't make haste to get well." I smiled faintly.

"George — how is George?" I said. "He has been here, has he not?—and had to leave?"

"I tell you—getting up a vigorous flirtation with Mrs. Carlin." Ada went softly out, then Jamie ceased and looked after her, and then at me.

"This is your work, my dear little woman. It will keep your heart warm o' nights for many a long year."

"Not nearly so much my work as you think, Jamie," and I foolishly began crying. Jamie was turned out in a moment, and not even Ada would nurse admit again that evening.

Oh, I make no pretensions to being any longer the staid well-balanced young person,

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as Frank would say, in whose company you set out. But you know, do you not? without being told, that I cried because I was only too happy. My heart was warm o' nights: so far Jamie was right; yet I had eyes to see that I had done little more than block a gap in the bank whilst a strong current swept by; done little more than pick up a stone or two that might have caught the current in its swiftness and sufficed to send it swirling out of its bed.

And when, with gathering strength, I was allowed more and more of their society—it was very slowly that I was allowed it, for the fever was a different affair with me from what it was with Ada—I saw more clearly than it is generally given us to see that the illness which, in a general way, would be taken to be an untoward matter, was a very happy thing for me; for us all. There had been for all to recover themselves from a state of unnatural

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tension, and there was a new and singular position to take up towards each other, by persons of matured habits. The fever came on us, making one of what have been well called "enforced pauses in life;" when it released us, we found processes to which we had intended bringing debate, persuasion, the most urgent and, probably, more or less maladroit means, effected without our agency. It was a good lesson; besides, it left behind no vestige of unpleasant remembrances.

But you will be thinking how did Ada come to know; and Jamie to be established there; and the whole affair to be accepted. I can't do better than give it in Mrs. Bushe's own words, for to Mrs. Bushe it fell to tell Ada: ah, and I am sure the dear old lady has not been so importantly happy because of anything for many a day, and it has sufficed to give her a certain property in us ever since.

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Mrs. Bushe was seated by my couch whilst Ada was taking her drive. Mrs. Bushe had come in to luncheon, and had stayed on, with the kind intention of entertaining me during the hour or so Ada would be away. But if it was one half as much enjoyment to me as it was to Mrs. Bushe herself I did remarkably well.

"Such a house as it was, my dear, you would never believe. Mrs. Noble picking you up from the floor of your room, and one of the housemaids going into hysterics, and Mr. Leyland threatening them to turn them all out of doors if they were not quiet, and sending off for me, and forbidding them to say a word to Ada until I came. Such a house as it was, dear, dear!"

"And when you came you told Ada?"

"Well, my dear, I said to the Archdeacon, 'What am I to do? Suppose anything had to happen now—suppose anything

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had to happen. Why, that dear girl—I know there are things—but that dear child would never cease to reproach me that I had not spoken. 'Indeed,' said my husband, 'I really don't know that I can advise you, Emma. Do according as you find matters.' 'So I will,' I said, 'so I will. I will do according as I find things.' Well, I shan't forget soon, my dear. After I had said, 'How are you this morning?' and all that—for I had not been in the house two minutes before I made up my mind to tell Mrs. Leyland, after I had asked what kind of night she had passed, and that sort of thing, you know—I said to Ada, 'I am very sorry to find Miss Doughty not very well this morning. Indeed, I think Dr. Warth will say it is this fever.' Ah, my dear, she was so very anxious for you, and wanted to go to your room immediately, and ever so many things that I couldn't allow; and I said, 'No, no;'

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and put her back into the chair by me: 'Miss Doughty is a very noble-hearted, unselfish girl,' I said. You will excuse me, my dear, for repeating it; but I did say so, and I meant it, too. And she herself couldn't say enough good of you. 'I should be very proud, now, to have a sister like Miss Doughty,' I remarked, quite casually, you see." And here Mrs. Bushe's nods and gestures became very vivid. "And Ada said, 'Who would not?' And I said, 'I think it would almost cure Miss Doughty to hear you say so.' And I got her hand in mine, and I looked very much in earnest. 'Mrs. Leyland,' I said, 'have you never thought?—have you never seen anything in Miss Doughty? Have you never thought why your sister has hesitated at nothing that she could do for you?'"

"And what did Ada say?" And I turned my face away, so that Mrs.

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Bushe could not see it when she should answer.

"Say, my dear? Why, she said first, 'What do you mean, Mrs. Bushe? Oh, you cannot—oh, what *do* you mean?'—with her face all in a tremor of surprise, my dear. But I did not speak, for I knew it would be best she should help herself to my meaning. And so she did, and turned quite white and quiet. And she was ever so long before she did speak. And then what she said was, 'I think there was never any one had to thank God as I have to thank Him.' That was what she said, my dear—'I think there was never any one had to thank God as I have.'"

I lay silent upon that some long time. "And did she say anything more? Did she ask no questions?"

"Well, once she could think, she was all in such a flutter about your being ill, my dear.

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And in such a fret to think Dr. Warth wouldn't come—by telegraph one would suppose her to have expected him, poor man. But she has said something since about you and your brother and the bank affair, and that dear fellow that died. Mr. Bushe, your Mr. Bushe, told me all about him, my dear. But Ada,—I imagine Ada is not one ever to say much, Miss Doughty."

"No," I answered, "Ada is one to both find out and settle things without much talking of them."

Just then Ada came in.

"Jeanie," said she, in her grave way, which it is left for one to translate, "I think you appreciate Mrs. Bushe's company more than you do mine. Quite a libel on *my* powers of entertainment I call your present bright face." And then little pale-face must give point to her reproachful words with a very sweet kiss.

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"Ah, my dear," said Mrs. Bushe, sprightlily, "it's my conversation. I have always been thought to have a talent for conversation." And the funny little old lady, thinking it a great joke, nodded vigorously to me, to keep up the appearance of mystery.

But I am sure Ada pretty well understood then, even if she had not understood my whispered word or two when she kissed me.

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CHAPTER XII.

MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

"Under every guilty secret there is hidden a brood of guilty wishes, whose unwholesome infecting life is cherished by the darkness. The contaminating effect of deeds often lies less in the commission than in the consequent adjustment of our desires—the enlistment of our self-interest on the side of falsity; as, on the other hand, the purifying influence of public confession springs from the fact, that by it the hope in lies is for ever swept away and the soul recovers the noble attitude of simplicity."—*Romola.*

THAT unpliableness where general opinion is concerned, which I have before striven to account for, now served Ada in good stead. Dr. Warth advised change for us invalids, as soon as we should be able to travel, and Frank was thinking to get away from Southwich for a year or two. But Ada quietly discountenanced any such idea, giving him

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no chance of making anything more of it by publishing a fully elaborated plan of her own. When Ada in her indifferent languid fashion, which seems neither to solicit nor require, speaks of things as if they were to be taken for granted, most people fall into the snare and just do take them for granted. It is curious, by the way, to see the manner of Ada's influence over Frank and Jamie. Jamie is partly aware of it, and will laugh and ask why I am exempt, and tells Ada she rules them and I rule her, and why should I? But he gets duly punished for speaking such bald truths. Ada looks a little queerly at me, and says, "Well?" What can Jamie say more? Clever man as he is, he is annihilated.

But for Ada's plan. We—the Leylands and I—were to go to St. Leonards for the three or four months of winter.

"So we shall be near London," says Ada

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to Jamie, "and you and George. Then in the early spring we shall come back here and have the wedding. Now, Frank, won't you say I have a head for arrangement?" George is sitting by, looking overpoweringly grateful to Ada; and what can that poor fellow Frank say? See how many desirable pleasant things any word of demur on his part must appear to be also aimed at. Oh, it is surprising how cunning women of Ada's stamp can be!

But I know what my dear thought, and I know how right she was. With a man of Frank's disposition it was everything that he should keep a steadfast face to what would be said of him; acquire "the habit of courage." Of course it was all very horrible; but never nearly so bad as the presentiment of it. He had to go up to London to Mr. Bayliss, and Mr. Bayliss said some very plain things. Amongst others, that it

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was only his wife's relationship to Wat that saved him complete exposure.

"Sir," said Leyland then, looking Mr. Bayliss manfully in the face, "that is the least of many things. I should have been done for altogether if it had not been for my wife."

Jamie told me that Mr. Bayliss stopped in what he was saying, then after a pause said:

"Leyland, you don't want lecturing. Will you do me the favour of considering me your friend for your own sake, as well as for your wife's?"

There was also Mr. Hulyard to give satisfaction to. And this was a more difficult affair still. Frank's gambling debts had to be met, and he was much at the mercy of Mr. Hulyard in providing the means. With a great wrench he brought himself to propose the sale of the Nether House estate, the patrimony of the Leylands.

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"Yes, that is the only way to meet the claims," said Mr. Hulyard, stiffly, his mode of thought wholly determined against such courses as Leyland had practised. "I should have had to suggest it to you if you had not seen it of yourself. None of the other property can be alienated. I suppose, by the by, you don't think anything of the risk, not to speak of actual loss sustained, we have run through you—your connection with us?" And he went on to say things harder than Mr. Bayliss had said. For he was the man to say harder things; although with perhaps scarcely so just an appreciation of the evil of what he was condemning.

But even with Mr. Hulyard relenting followed.

"Look here, Leyland," he said, at length. "I knew your father. And Mr. Hutton—why he made the firm. You have had a sharpish lesson; I'll talk with Rogerson, and

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the Nether House shall not be sold. It will be a beautiful disappointment to Mathieson for one thing. And besides"—and with this Mr. Hulyard saved his business conscience; "it might do harm, a sale might. It might revive the uneasy feeling as to the bank. Our customers are settling down now, and I don't ask for a second shock to our credit."

So some arrangement whereby the firm advanced the money was come to; the Leylands' income was large enough to make two or three years' retrenchment no hard matter, and Frank was safe from any great money troubles.

But there were yet other things to suffer the result of. This person and that had consented to receive Leyland again; but what tone would society adopt? Let me tell you it was a very serious question—if only for the reason that there are so many of us who would be glad and bold if only society would chal-

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lenge us by its members individually, who are quite staggered and have all our combativeness quit us before the position towards us of society in the aggregate—that position not necessarily being one of antagonism. For it is a great, strange, constant truth that there is and must be a continual danger to us in *whatever* attitude society chooses to adopt towards us, be it of enthusiasm, be it of irritation, of apathy, or of direct countenance. Holding this, it always puts me somewhat out of patience to hear it said, "Oh, it does not signify to me one bit what 'people' say." The real meaning of which is, of course, "what 'people' say in *blame*." When how little that is of the matter; and how much it must signify, we being what we are, and things being as they are!

Ada was not one to make the mistake. She was only anxious to shorten the period before they should return to Southwich,

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because she felt it was better once for all to know what they would have to accept at the hands of society. Which was certainly giving its verdict some importance; and as certainly furthest from surrender to it.

The Leylands' position had been somewhat peculiar. Almost alone among the city people—the higher clerical dignitaries scarcely coming under that category—they had been freely admitted as of the "county set." The Homfrays, and, perhaps, the Rogersons, just one here and there, enjoyed the privilege with them; but still very few in number were the favoured ones. And now it seemed that by this the outer measure of Leyland's lapse was to be decreed.

Leyland's name was on the books of the very exclusive County Club, and at quite the first of his return, there went about a steady report that a general meeting of the club was to be called to consider the propriety of

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removing it therefrom. Action, indeed, was only stayed in it because of the temporary absence of one or two of the principal members; party interests being very delicately balanced in Southshire, people have to be very cautious that no convenient after-objection be taken to what they do. But then the illness in his family took Leyland's name a second time out of the field of such discussions, and before the subject could again be actively broached, there had gathered together in his support a not inconsiderable body of friends. Leyland would long ago have voluntarily withdrawn his name, had not Mr. Rogerson, Mr. Hulyard, and other friends of his, laid it on him not to do so unless the choice came to be only between that and actual expulsion. Of course, to a high-spirited fellow like Leyland this was the harder course by far; but so much had been done for him by these, his friends,

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he could only submit on this point. I can never sufficiently admire Ada's delicate tact at this momentous period—the intense, complete sympathy she had with her husband on occasions that would have had no trouble for herself; the right way of thinking she maintained amidst it all; the trust she had in her husband, so that indeed it was a large element in her influence with him.

This was the state of affairs; the Rogersons, Hulyards—the city, in short—might be depended on not to further visit Leyland's offence on his head; but the greater county people were slow to give any sign, and the Banbrooks and others of that stamp would surely enough follow them, whatever the event were. This was the critical, uncertain moment, when Frank himself—and I know it was in secret Ada's keenest delight that Frank should have done it—Frank himself unconsciously put his riding-whip in the

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scale, and turned it in his favour. And the manner of it I will now tell you.

The Mathiesons were bankers also, as I think I have said; their business, however, lying more with the western division of the county. There were a good many of the name, young and old; most of them in the banking firm. It was generally understood that they were exerting themselves to hush up Hill Mathieson's share in the Royal Northern Standard Bank business, and were keeping him on in the firm, for much the same reasons as Mr. Hulyard had assumed to have influenced him in Leyland's case. But curiously, people refused any but their own deductions, and made distinctions when and as they pleased. Hill Mathieson, said they, is much too cautious as well as covetous, to have endangered his firm; *ergo*, there is no need to get up a panic. But, they also said, Mathieson has, therefore, acted doubly

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dishonourably beside the other fellow, and we are not going to think anything else for anybody.

This was the feeling running in people's minds when the proposed erection of a memorial to a great Southshire statesman, lately dead, brought together most of the magnates of the county in the Shire Hall, Southwich. The Lord Lieutenant, the Bishop, the Dean, the High Sheriff, the Marquis of Lipswich, young Joslyn Berne, Sir William Homfray, Sir Robert Banbrook, Mr., or Squire Banbrook, as he was more often called—every one who was any one and who had not the most urgent business elsewhere, made up the assemblage. Leyland was there; not without some misgivings. He was in Southwich for a week on business, and he had written to Ada at St. Leonards saying he should attend the meeting; as he thought it, and thought she would think it,

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the right thing for him to do. But he was not there without some constraint on his inclinations, and some misgivings. The Archdeacon had talked with him some minutes, so had Sir William Homfray; Mr. John Rogerson had taken his seat by him; but Leyland did perceive that the general company kept aloof from him. "Never mind," he thought, "I can bear it;" so he told Ada in his account of what afterwards occurred. "Perhaps they will come round when they find I mean to be an honest man henceforth." But terribly uncomfortable I have no doubt he was; hitherto a very popular fellow, sought out by people above him, he less than any one knew what to make of this sort of thing.

The Lord Lieutenant, Lord Levensholme, and the Marquis, and the Bishop, and one or two of the city people, as was always the politic rule at county meetings held in the

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city, had done the proper amount of speaking; a statue had been voted, a committee formed, five hundred pounds, of which the two city speakers gave one-fifth, promised in the room, and the company had broken up into informal groups.

The Lord Lieutenant and the Marquis, gentlemen of opposite parties, were being led about under the respective guidance of the more active politicians on either side, dispensing, as are their lot and duty in life (and what a lot and duty it must be), civil speeches with here and there an invitation. Frank was doing his best to bring about his isolation by his apprehension of it. The Honourable Frank Mussared,—Lord Levensholme's eldest son,—Joslyn Berne, and Edmund Homfray, the young rector of Ednesborne Pomfret and Sir William's heir, made up a group that six months ago Frank would have joined as a matter of course; to-day he felt it wouldn't

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do. Firle of Borley,—Firle, who times out of mind had shot over Leyland's preserves,—sauntered over to the group; but Leyland held back more than ever, for Firle had passed very near him, and had been suspiciously shortsighted at that particular moment. Terribly uncomfortable Leyland was, and when a man is in that temper even his bosom friend had best not go too far with him.

Of the company was also Hill Mathieson. It greatly aggravated Leyland's humour to watch him, as he felt compelled to do in spite of himself: to Leyland's eyes he had never been more at his ease, nor better accepted. But, in truth, Hill Mathieson was only playing the game Leyland had too strong a sense of honest shame to attempt. If he could only be seen speaking with this particular person and that, never mind how cold the reply was, there were dozens of persons who

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wouldn't know, and who wouldn't after it give him the go-by; because it does not do to be singular. I don't say how it answered, but it always was Hill Mathieson's style of playing the game of this world's places.

True to himself, he came up to Leyland and held out his hand, with unabashed countenance.

"Leyland, old fellow, how are you?" They had not met, mind, since the exposure. "There are all sorts of things I ought to say to you, I suppose?"

Leyland, pulling at his moustache, stared past him, affecting not to see him.

"Come, old fellow," repeated Mathieson, apparently not in the least disconcerted, only speaking in a lower tone, as if in confidence between Leyland and him. "I say, don't bear malice. Deuced bad job for me as well as for you, you know. We are both in the same boat——"

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"Both in the same boat, sir, do I understand you?" said Frank, drawing himself up and speaking in a loud haughty voice (we had the account from Mr. John Rogerson). "I beg your pardon, you are in some error. I am Mr. Leyland."

"And I am Mr. Hill Mathieson," exclaimed that gentleman, beginning to lose his temper. "And, devil take you, what do you mean?" By this time every one's attention was drawn to them.

"That I am not on speaking terms with Mr. Hill Mathieson; but that if he chooses to come out into the street I will be at the trouble to show him how a blackguard should be horsewhipped." And Frank, who can be a mighty fine gentleman, made him a grand bow and folded his arms before him.

"Say that again," almost shouted Mathieson.

"If you will come out into the street I

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have a whip in capital trim for you, Mr. Hill Mathieson, and all blackguards like you."

Mathieson, who had not a drop of cowardly blood in his veins, struck out wildly at Leyland, who only just succeeded in warding off the blow. But then a dozen hands were laid in arrest on him, and his father's partner and his was saying in his ear a few savagely-in-earnest words:

"What do you mean by this, Hill? Why could you not let bad alone? As if there had not been enough talk as it is. Stir another step in it, sir, and take the consequences."

The tone was so sternly significant that Mathieson's moral—not his physical—courage failed him. The consequences were not such as Mr. Hill Mathieson, with his decidedly damaged character, could afford to risk; so—I suppose it was the bitterest

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pill he ever swallowed in his life—he had to allow himself to be dragged away from Leyland's vicinity, and in a few minutes the room was clear of him.

Leyland had not acted upon any calculation, but if he had thought for a week, he could not have done better for himself; probably not half so well. He certainly had not acted upon any calculation; for he was rather disgusted with himself than not, that he should have allowed himself to be betrayed into any such altercation.

"Haven't seen you at the meet this winter, Leyland," said Lord Levensholme, becoming aware of Frank's presence—Lord Levensholme is a great hunting man. "Been abroad for Mrs. Leyland's health, haven't you? Hope soon to see her amongst us again quite recovered."

"Thank you, Lord Levensholme, my wife's health is quite recovered," said Frank,

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in a stately sort of way; looking round him with quite an injured air. He saw, poor fellow, that these people, not my lord alone, but nine-tenths of those present, were going to be friendly with him; and he was feeling that they had not an atom of reason in being so. So he said in that same distinct voice, almost glaring round on them: "Gentlemen, I am not going to take people in a second time. I'm—I'm not going to get from you the hand of good-fellowship on false pretences. That is why I hold myself above that—that fellow. *I* wish to openly acknowledge that I was not at all free from blame. I have done that which I believe not one other man in this room could be brought to do. I will give myself my due, though: I think I am, if possible, more unlikely than any other man in the room to do a thing of the kind again." And with that he would have left the hall. But he couldn't quite

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walk over the Marquis, who was planted square in front of him.

"Well spoken," said he, a soldier who had been "i' the deadly breach,"—"well spoken, Mr. Leyland. I never saw a better action more nobly done—and I was at Badajos too."

"My lord."

"Yes," said the Marquis, pertinently, as square as ever before his victim, who scarcely knew how to take it. Since the Marquis, it must be understood, had retired from his first profession, the army, he had set up in business as a humourist: of course there were plenty of people to give him their countenance in his new character. But between you and me, I don't think he always esteemed his best patrons most.

"When," continued the fine old fellow, with a kindly, amused air,—"when will that learned brother-in-law of yours be down

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again? For we must have you to dinner then. By the by I see he has obtained that professorship. It was a close thing between him and Bilston — and there is little to choose between them: both good men; men we have to make the most we can of. So, of course, being related to a friend of mine, Doughty has my sympathies. I should really very much like a conversation with him; I am a dabbler in science myself. My son there and my wife are of opinion that I shall blow myself up some day."

And people laughed, and Major Wells, Mr. Banbrook's son-in-law, was of opinion he wouldn't do it now, since he didn't do it at Badajos.

Frank saw that it would be ungracious, even savour of ostentation, to make any further demur; so he entered into the conversation, and came away with a soberly glad

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heart; feeling keenly how in everything his lot was beyond his deserts.

It is when I think of these brave words of Frank's (never mind how successful they were, so much more to the credit of those who heard them), that I feel surest for him: they were the promptings of a fine impulse; but I have seen enough of him to know that that impulse was based on a conviction.

Sometimes when I and my husband go down to them at Southwich, or they come up to us in London, I think I see the old dangerous facility cropping up; sometimes I think he does not quite know what a wife he has—but it is only sometimes: natures and moods are different, little things come out. One can see in Ada's face that she knows how dear she is to him. She has suaver manners now, even with strangers; presuming false people can get on no better with her than formerly: it is more than ever essential that

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people should be true with her—only she does not seek to set herself apart, as formerly, if people are not quite as she likes. And she seems more dependent on those around her. There is a pleasant reason for these happy changes in her.

When we go to the Nether House now there are the pattering of little feet about it. There is a gentlemanly little Frank, rather grave though, like his mother, and a quaint little Jane (it was Ada's whim to give the child my name rather than her own), to whom Annette is a very kind, gracious, judicious aunt of seventeen. I sometimes think that Jamie—well, quite as often I do not think it at all.

There is only one point of the many between us on which Ada to this day remains obstinate. She persists still, that Jamie and I are to her, friends above brother and sister. But she does not so much as wish me to

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think alike with her, so that I mind but very little. Of her own self she spoke away the last reserve there could be between us. It was one of those winter evenings at St. Leonards, those long evenings, when Frank would sometimes be away, in which we learned so much of one another. She said to me suddenly,—

"Jane, I wish you could think kindly of Mr. Hutton."

She saw I was slow to speak. "He was kinder to me than one can well imagine, Jane," she went on very warmly. "He was the most constant man I have ever known. And he was a good man, too, I do believe. I know he never changed towards you and Jamie, but I believe at the last it was more habit than animosity."

"And believe me, dear," I said, "I can think kindly of Mr. Hutton. There are things in most people's lives that are not

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well. I never think of it without thanking you, dear, for letting all these long-instilled prejudices fall, for love of me."

"No, no, Jane," she replied, putting her hand lovingly on mine. "Can I ever thank you enough for coming to me in the humble way you did, and so, by your kind patient caution, preventing me from being so cruel to a good man's memory as to perpetuate his mistake?"

THE END.

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